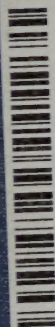


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Honoré de Balzac

LA COMÉDIE HUMAINE





The Human Comedy  
PHILOSOPHIC  
AND ANALYTIC STUDIES  
VOLUME VI







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## AT CARENTAN

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*"Oh! my child, my child!" she cried, sobbing, and frantically covering him with kisses.*

*"Madame—" said the stranger.*

*"Ah! it is not he!" she cried, recoiling in terror.*

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The *Edition Définitive* of the *Comédie*  
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now for the first time com-  
pletely translated  
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ADIEU



*TO PRINCE FREDERICK VON SCHWARZENBERG*



\*

“Forward, Deputy of the Centre! It behooves us to go at the double-quick if we wish to be at table at the same time as the others. Up foot! Skip marquis! there you go! good! You cross the furrows like a veritable stag!”

These words were uttered by a huntsman who was seated tranquilly on the outskirts of the forest of Isle-Adam, while smoking a Havana cigar and awaiting his companion, who had evidently been wandering about for a long time in the brushwood. At his side were four panting dogs, looking, as he was, at the person to whom he was speaking. To understand the jocose flavor of these remarks, which were repeated more than once, it should be said that the huntsman to whom they were addressed was a short, stout man, whose prominent paunch was symptomatic of a truly ministerial corpulence. So that he picked his way with difficulty over the rough surface of an extensive field recently mowed, where his progress was considerably embarrassed by the stubble; moreover, to augment his discomfort, the sun's rays fell obliquely on his face and caused the perspiration to ooze forth in great drops. Engrossed by the task of maintaining his equilibrium, he leaned sometimes forward, sometimes backward, imitating the evolutions of a two-wheeled chaise jolting over a rough road.



It was one of those September days which finish the ripening of the grapes by equatorial heat. The weather betokened a storm. Although the great black clouds near the horizon were still separated by patches of azure, lighter clouds were rushing up with terrific velocity, and stretching a light, grayish curtain from west to east. As there was no wind except in the upper regions of the air, the atmosphere held the scorching vapors from the earth stationary on the lowlands. The valley which the sportsman was crossing, being surrounded by tall trees which shut off the air, was as hot as a furnace. The glowing, silent forest seemed to be thirsty. Birds and insects were mute and the tree-tops hardly swayed. Those persons who have any remembrance of the summer of 1819 must feel compassion for the poor official, who was sweating blood and water to join his jocose companion. The latter, as he puffed away at his cigar, had calculated from the sun's position that it might be about five in the afternoon.

"Where the devil are we?" growled the stout huntsman, wiping his forehead, and leaning against a tree almost opposite his companion; for he felt that he had not strength enough left to leap the broad ditch which lay between them.

"Do you ask *me* that question?" laughingly retorted the huntsman, lying in the tall yellow grass at the top of the bank.

He tossed the end of his cigar into the ditch.

"I swear by Saint Hubert," he cried, "that I will never again be caught risking my life in a strange

country with a magistrate, even though he be, like you, my dear D'Albon, an old school-fellow!"

"Why, Philippe, don't you understand French? You must have left your wits in Siberia," rejoined the stout man, with a comically piteous glance at a sign-post about a hundred yards away.

"I understand," replied Philippe, as he sprang to his feet, seized his gun, and started off with a leap toward the sign-post.—"This way, D'Albon! this way! half wheel to the left!" he cried to his companion, pointing to a broad paved road. "'Road from Baillet to Isle-Adam,'" he read; "in this direction we shall find the road to Cassan, which must branch off from the Isle-Adam road."

"True, colonel," said Monsieur d'Albon, replacing on his head a cap with which he had been fanning himself.

"Forward, then, my venerable counsellor," replied Colonel Philippe, whistling to the dogs, who seemed already to obey him more willingly than the magistrate to whom they belonged.

"Do you know, monsieur le marquis," continued the facetious soldier, "that we still have more than two leagues to do? The village we see yonder must be Baillet."

"Great God!" exclaimed the Marquis d'Albon, "go on to Cassan, if you choose, but you'll go alone. I prefer to wait here, notwithstanding the storm, until you send me a horse from the château. You have made a fool of me, Sucy. We were to have a nice little hunting-party, to beat up places

that I knew, and not go far away from Cassan. Bah! instead of having any sport, you have kept me running like a greyhound since four o'clock in the morning, and we have had no breakfast except two glasses of milk! Ah! if you ever have a suit at court, I'll see that you lose it, though you are in the right a hundred times over."

The discouraged huntsman seated himself on one of the stones at the foot of the sign-post, laid aside his gun and his empty game-bag, and drew a long breath.

"Such men are your deputies, O France!" cried Colonel de Sucey, laughing heartily. "Ah! my poor D'Albon, if you had been, as I have, six years in the heart of Siberia—"

He did not finish his sentence, but raised his eyes as if his misfortunes were a secret between God and himself.

"Come, forward!" he added. "If you remain seated, you are lost."

"What can you expect, Philippe? Sitting is such an inveterate habit in a magistrate! 'Pon honor, I am played out! If I had only killed as much as a hare!"

The two sportsmen presented an unusually striking contrast. The government official was forty-two years old and seemed no more than thirty, while the soldier, who was only thirty, seemed to be at least forty. Both were decorated with the red rosette, the insignia of an officer of the Legion of Honor. A few scattered locks of hair, partly black and partly white, like a magpie's wing, protruded

from beneath the colonel's cap; beautiful blond curls adorned the magistrate's temples. One was tall, spare, gaunt, and nervous, and the wrinkles on his white face denoted terrible passions or frightful misfortunes; the other had a jovial face, beaming with health and worthy of an epicurean. Both were very much burned by the sun, and their long fawn-colored leather gaiters bore the marks of all the ditches and all the swamps they had traversed.

"Come," cried Monsieur de Sucey, "forward! After a short hour's walk, we shall be at Cassan, around a well-laden table."

"It must be that you were never in love," replied the councillor, with a piteous yet comical air, "you are as pitiless as Article 304 of the Penal Code!"

Philippe de Sucey started violently; his broad forehead contracted, and became as dark as the sky was at that moment. Although a horribly bitter memory distorted all his features, he did not weep. Like all men of powerful mind, he was able to force back his emotions into the lowest depths of his heart, and, like many men of pure character, considered it in some sort immodest to lay bare his sorrows when no mortal words can express their depth and when they dread the mockery of those who do not care to understand them. Monsieur d'Albon had one of those delicately sensitive hearts which divine mental suffering and feel keenly the trouble they have involuntarily caused by some ill-judged remark. He respected his friend's silence, forgot his own weariness, rose, and followed him without speaking, deeply

grieved that he had touched a wound which was evidently not cicatrized.

"Some day, my friend," said Philippe, pressing his hand and thanking him for his unspoken repentance with a heart-rending glance, "some day I will tell you the story of my life. To-day, I could not."

They walked on in silence. When the colonel's trouble seemed to have disappeared, the councillor remembered his fatigue; and with the instinct, or rather with the determination, of an exhausted man, he peered into the depths of the forest on every side; he questioned the tree-tops, scrutinized the paths, hoping to discover some shelter where he could ask hospitality. On reaching a cross-roads, he fancied that he could see a thread of smoke rising among the trees. He stopped, gazed very attentively in that direction, and discovered the dark, green branches of several pines in the midst of a dense thicket.

"A house! a house!" he cried, with the joy with which a shipwrecked sailor shouts: "Land! land!"

With that, he darted eagerly through some thick underbrush, and the colonel, who had fallen into a deep reverie, followed him mechanically.

"I much prefer to find a chair and an omelet and a slice of home-made bread here, than to go on to Cassan in quest of divans, truffles, and Burgundy!"

Those words were extorted from the councillor by his enthusiasm at sight of a whitewashed wall in the distance, which stood out against the dark background of the gnarled trunks of the forest.

"Aha! this looks to me like some old priory," cried

the Marquis d'Albon, with renewed satisfaction, as he arrived at an old-fashioned black-barred gate, from which he could see, in the centre of a park of considerable size, a building in the style formerly employed for monastic monuments.—“How well those rascals of monks knew how to select a location!”

This last exclamation was called forth by the magistrate's amazement at sight of the poetic retreat upon which his eyes rested. The house was built half-way up the mountain at the summit of which stands the village of Nerville. The huge primeval oaks of the forest described an immense circle around the habitation and made it a veritable solitude. The building formerly used by the monks had a southern exposure. The park apparently contained about forty acres. Near the house was a green field, charmingly intersected by several limpid streams, with ponds scattered gracefully about, with no appearance of artificiality. Here and there were clumps of shapely trees with foliage of varying shades of green. Then there were grottoes deftly arranged, and massive terraces with their staircases and their rusted rails, which imparted a physiognomy of its own to that wild Thebaid. Art had combined its inventions with the most picturesque natural effects, with charming results. It seemed that human passions must needs die at the foot of those great trees, which protected that shelter from the uproar of the world, even as they tempered the sun's intense heat.

“What confusion!” said Monsieur d'Albon to himself, admiring the sombre expression imparted by the



ruins to that landscape, which seemed to have been visited by a malediction.

It was like a place of ill-omen, abandoned by mankind. The ivy had spread its twisted tendrils and its rich green cloak over everything. Brown, green, yellow, red mosses displayed their romantic hues on trees, benches, roofs, and stones. The worm-eaten windows were time-worn and weather-beaten; the balconies were broken, the terraces in ruins. Some of the blinds hung by a single hinge. The disjointed doors seemed in no condition to resist an assailant. The branches of the fruit-trees, laden with glistening bunches of mistletoe, extended far, but bore no fruits. Tall weeds flourished in the paths. This utter disorder imparted a charmingly poetic effect to the picture, and sowed dreamy thoughts in the mind of the spectator. A poet would have tarried there, plunged in melancholy meditation, admiring that harmonious confusion, that desolation in which there was no lack of charm. At that moment, a sunbeam forced its way through the gullies in the clouds and illuminated that half-uncivilized scene with rays of countless colors. The brown roof-tiles gleamed, the mosses shone resplendent, fantastic shadows played over the fields and under the trees; dead colors awoke, piquant contrasts contended for mastery, the foliage was sharply outlined in the light. Suddenly the light disappeared. That landscape, which seemed to have spoken, held its peace, and once more became gloomy, or, rather, soft as the softest tint of an autumn twilight.

"This is the palace of the Sleeping Beauty," said the councillor to himself, already looking upon the house with the eye of a landowner. "Whom can it belong to? A man must be a great fool not to occupy such a charming property!"

At that instant, a woman darted from beneath a walnut-tree at the right of the gate, and flitted before the councillor without a sound, as swiftly as the shadow of a cloud; the vision struck him dumb with surprise.

"Well, D'Albon, what's the matter with you?" queried the colonel.

"I am rubbing my eyes to find out whether I am asleep or awake," was the magistrate's reply, as he put his face close to the bars to try to obtain another glimpse of the phantom.—"She is probably under that fig-tree," he said, calling Philippe's attention to the foliage of a tree which rose above the wall at the left of the gate.

"Who may she be?"

"What! as if I knew!" replied Monsieur d'Albon. "A strange woman just rose here before me," he added in a low voice; "she seemed to belong rather to the family of ghosts than to the world of the living. She was so slender, so light, so vapory, that she must have been transparent. Her face was as white as milk. Her clothes, her hair, her eyes, were black. She looked at me as she passed, and although I am not easily frightened, her cold, fixed stare froze the blood in my veins."

"Was she pretty?" queried Philippe.

"I don't know. I saw nothing of the face but the eyes."

"The deuce take the dinner at Cassan!" cried the colonel. "Let us stay here. I have a childish longing to go into this strange place. Do you see those window-sashes painted red, and those red lines on the mouldings of the doors and windows? Doesn't it seem as if it must be the devil's house? Perhaps he inherited from the monks. Come, let us run after the black and white lady! Forward!" cried Philippe, with assumed gayety.

At that moment, the two sportsmen heard a cry not unlike that of a bird caught in a trap. They listened intently. The foliage of a clump of shrubbery rustled in the silence, like the plashing of waves on the beach; but, although they strained their ears to detect some further sounds, the earth remained silent and kept the secret of the unknown woman's footsteps, if indeed she had walked.

"This is very strange!" cried Philippe, following the circular course described by the walls of the park.

The two friends soon reached a path through the forest leading to the village of Chauvry. Having followed that path as far as the Paris road, they found themselves in front of a great iron gate, and could see the principal façade of the mysterious dwelling. On that side, the disorder had reached its climax. There were three buildings, forming three sides of a square, their walls seamed by huge cracks. Broken tiles and slates heaped on the ground, and dilapidated roofs, denoted absolute neglect. Fruit

lay under the trees, rotting ungathered. A cow was grazing on the bowling-green and trampling through the flower-beds, while a goat browsed on the green grapes on a trellised vine.

"Here everything is harmonious, and the confusion is systematized, so to speak," said the colonel, pulling a bell-pull.

But the bell had no tongue. The two sportsmen heard nothing save the peculiarly shrill sound of a rusty spring. Although sadly dilapidated, the small door in the wall near the iron gate resisted all their efforts to open it.

"Well! this is becoming very interesting," said Philippe to his companion.

"If I were not a magistrate, I should believe that that black woman was a witch," replied Monsieur d'Albon.

He had hardly spoken the last word when the cow came to the gate and offered them her warm nose, as if she felt the need of seeing human beings. Thereupon a woman, if that name can be applied to the indescribable being who rose from beneath a clump of shrubbery, pulled the cow by her rope. This woman wore on her head a red handkerchief, from beneath which protruded stray locks of light hair not unlike flax on a distaff. She had no neckerchief. A coarse woollen skirt, with alternating black and gray stripes, several inches too short, allowed her legs to be seen. One might readily have believed that she belonged to one of the tribes of Redskins made famous by Cooper, for her legs and her bare neck and arms

seemed to have been painted a brick-red. No gleam of intelligence illuminated her dull face. Her light-blue eyes were cold and lifeless. A few scattered white hairs served as eyebrows. Her mouth was so misshapen that one could see her teeth, which were irregular in shape and arrangement, but as white as a dog's.

"Holla, my good woman!" cried Monsieur de Sucy.

She walked slowly to the gate, looking stupidly at the two huntsmen, at sight of whom a painful, forced smile came to her lips.

"Where are we? What house is this? To whom does it belong? Who are you? Do you belong here?"

To these questions and a multitude of others with which the two friends plied her in turn, she replied only by guttural grunts which seemed more appropriate to an animal than to a human creature.

"Don't you see that she is deaf and dumb?" said the magistrate.

"*Bons-Hommes!*" cried the woman.

"Ah! to be sure. This must be the old convent of the Bons-Hommes," said Monsieur d'Albon.

They renewed their questions. But the peasant woman, like a wilful child, blushed, played with her wooden shoe, twisted the rope attached to the cow who had returned to her grazing, stared at the two Nimrods, and examined every part of their outfit; she whined, groaned, and clucked, but did not speak.

"What's your name?" demanded Philippe, gazing intently at her as if he would bewitch her.

"Geneviève," she replied, with an idiotic laugh.

"Thus far the cow is the most intelligent creature we have seen," said the magistrate. "I propose to fire my gun, and see if somebody won't come."

As he raised his weapon, the colonel checked him with a gesture, and pointed to the strange woman who had so keenly stirred his curiosity at first. She seemed absorbed in profound meditation as she approached slowly along a path some distance away, so that the two friends had ample time to examine her. She was dressed in a much worn black satin dress. Her long hair fell in countless curls over her forehead and about her shoulders, reaching to her waist, so that it served her as a shawl. Doubtless she was accustomed to that condition of affairs, for she brushed the hair away from her temples very rarely; but on those occasions she moved her head so suddenly and sharply that she had not to do it twice to free her forehead and her eyes from that thick veil. Her movements, like those of an animal, were marked by an admirable confidence in her physical mechanism and by an agility which might well seem prodigious in a woman. The two sportsmen were amazed beyond words to see her spring up to a branch of an apple-tree and cling to it as lightly as a bird. She picked some apples and ate them, then dropped to the ground with the graceful ease which we admire in the squirrel. Her limbs possessed an elasticity which took away from all her movements the slightest trace of awkwardness or effort. She gambolled over the turf, rolled upon it



as a child might have done; then abruptly threw her feet and hands forward and lay stretched out on the grass with the unconstraint, the natural grace, of a cat sleeping in the sun. Hearing the thunder rumble in the distance, she turned and crouched on all-fours with the marvellous grace of a dog who hears a stranger approaching. As a result of that curious attitude, her black hair suddenly separated into two broad bands which fell on each side of her face, and enabled the two spectators of that strange scene to admire her shoulders, whose white skin shone like daisies in the field, and a neck whose perfect shape prefigured the perfection of all her bodily proportions.

She uttered a cry of pain, and sprang suddenly to her feet. Her successive movements were so graceful, they were executed so swiftly, that she seemed not to be a human creature, but one of the maidens of the air of whom Ossian sings. She walked toward a sheet of water, shook one of her legs slightly to get rid of her shoe, and seemed to enjoy dipping her alabaster foot in the water, admiring, doubtless, the undulations it produced, which resembled necklaces of brilliants. Then she knelt on the brink of the pool, and amused herself, like a child, by dipping her long tresses and suddenly taking them out, to watch the water with which they were drenched fall, drop by drop, forming rosaries of pearls, as it were, in the sunbeams.

“That woman is mad!” cried the councillor.

Geneviève uttered a hoarse cry, apparently addressed to the unknown, who rose hastily, throwing

the hair back from her face. At that moment, the colonel and D'Albon were able to see the woman's features distinctly. She, when she saw the two friends, bounded to the gate with the speed and lightness of a roe.

"*Adieu!*" she said, in a sweet, melodious voice; but that melody, impatiently awaited by the two huntsmen, did not disclose the slightest feeling or the slightest idea.

Monsieur d'Albon gazed admiringly at her long eyelashes, her dense black eyebrows, a skin of dazzling whiteness without the slightest trace of red. Tiny blue veins alone marred its whiteness. When the councillor turned to his friend to share with him the wonder aroused by the sight of that strange woman, he found him stretched out on the grass, apparently dead. Monsieur d'Albon discharged his gun in the air to summon assistance, and shouted: "Help!" as he tried to raise his friend. At the report, the unknown, who had hitherto stood like a statue, fled with the velocity of an arrow, uttering frightened cries like a wounded animal, and ran round and round the open field, with every indication of profound terror.

Monsieur d'Albon heard the wheels of a calèche on the Isle-Adam road, and sought assistance from its occupants by waving his handkerchief. The carriage at once drove toward the Bons-Hommes, and Monsieur d'Albon recognized his neighbors Monsieur and Madame de Granville, who at once alighted and offered the magistrate their carriage. Madame

de Granville happened to have a bottle of salts, which they put to Monsieur de Sucy's nose. When the colonel opened his eyes, he looked toward the field where the unknown was still running to and fro, shrieking, and uttered an indistinct exclamation, marked by an accent of horror; then he closed his eyes again, entreating his friend, with a gesture, to remove him from that spectacle. Monsieur and Madame de Granville left their carriage at the councillor's disposal, obligingly saying to him that they would continue their expedition on foot.

"In Heaven's name, who is that woman?" the magistrate asked, indicating the unknown.

"It is supposed that she comes from Moulins," replied Monsieur de Granville. "Her name is Comtesse de Vandières; she is said to be mad, but as she has been here only two months, I cannot warrant the accuracy of all the gossip."

Monsieur d'Albon thanked Monsieur and Madame de Granville, and started for Cassan.

"It is she!" cried Philippe, when he recovered his senses.

"Whom do you mean by she?" queried D'Albon.

"Stéphanie— Ah! dead and alive, alive and mad!—I thought that I was dying."

The judicious magistrate, realizing the gravity of the crisis through which his friend was passing, carefully avoided questioning him or irritating him; he was intensely impatient to reach the château, for the change in the colonel's features and his whole person made him fear that the countess might have

communicated her terrible disease to him. As soon as the carriage reached Avenue de l'Isle-Adam, D'Albon sent the footman for the village physician; so that he was at the colonel's bedside as soon as he was in bed.

"If monsieur le colonel had not been some time without food, he would have died," said the doctor. "His exhaustion saved him."

Having given orders as to the precautions to be taken, he went out to prepare a soothing potion with his own hands. The next morning, Monsieur de Sucy was better; but the doctor had thought it best to pass the night with him.

"I will tell you frankly, monsieur le marquis," he said to Monsieur d'Albon, "that I feared a lesion of the brain. Monsieur de Sucy received a very violent shock. His passions are strong; but, in his case, the first blow dealt is the decisive one. Tomorrow I think he will be out of danger."

The doctor was not mistaken, and the next day he allowed the magistrate to see his friend.

"My dear D'Albon," said Philippe, pressing his hand, "I look to you to do me a service! Go at once to the Bons-Hommes, find out all that you possibly can concerning the lady that we saw, and hurry home, for I shall count the minutes."

Monsieur d'Albon leaped upon a horse and galloped to the old abbey. When he arrived, he saw at the gate a tall, thin man with an attractive face, who answered in the affirmative when the magistrate asked him if he lived in that ruined house. Monsieur d'Albon told him the reasons for his call.

"What, monsieur," cried the stranger, "are you the man who fired that fatal shot? You nearly killed my poor patient."

"But I fired in the air, monsieur."

"You would have injured madame la comtesse less if you had hit her."

"At all events, we have no right to reproach each other, for the sight of your countess nearly killed my friend Monsieur de Sucy."

"Can it be that you refer to Baron Philippe de Sucy?" cried the doctor, clasping his hands. "Was he in Russia at the passage of the Bérésina?"

"Yes," replied D'Albon, "he was captured by Cossacks and taken to Siberia, whence he returned about eleven months since."

"Come in, monsieur," said the stranger, ushering the magistrate into a salon on the ground-floor of the building, where everything bore the marks of unreasoning devastation.

Broken vases of priceless porcelain stood beside a clock, whose globe was untouched. The silk curtains at the windows were torn, while the double one of muslin was intact.

"You see," he said to Monsieur d'Albon, as they entered, "the ravages committed by the charming creature to whom I have devoted my life. She is my niece; despite the impotence of my skill, I hope some day to restore her reason by a method which, unfortunately, only the rich can adopt."

Then, like all persons who live in solitude, being constantly preyed upon by his grief, he told the

magistrate at great length the following adventure, which is here set forth in more concise form and shorn of numerous digressions in which both the narrator and the councillor indulged.







When Maréchal Victor, about nine o'clock in the evening of the 28th of November, 1812, left the heights of Studzianka, which he had stubbornly defended throughout that day, he left there about a thousand men whose orders were to defend until the last gasp that one of the two bridges recently thrown over the Bérésina which was still in existence. That rear-guard had devoted itself to the task of saving a terribly large number of stragglers, benumbed by the cold, who obstinately refused to leave the baggage-train of the army. The heroism of that noble band was destined to be of no avail. The soldiers who rushed down in vast numbers to the banks of the Bérésina found there, unfortunately, the immense quantity of wagons, caissons, impedimenta of all descriptions, which the army had been obliged to abandon when effecting its passage of the stream during the 27th and 28th of November. Inheritors of incredible treasures, those hapless creatures, turned into brutes by the cold, took up their quarters in the deserted camp, broke up the baggage of the army to build cabins, made fires of anything that came to hand, cut up horses for food, tore the canvas tops from the wagons for bedclothes, and went to sleep instead of continuing their journey and crossing unharmed during the night that river which a most extraordinary fatality had already made so disastrous

to our army. The apathy of those poor soldiers can be understood only by those who can remember traversing those boundless deserts of snow, with nothing to drink but the snow, no bed but the snow, no outlook but a horizon of snow, no food but the snow, with now and then a frozen beet, a handful of flour, or a bit of horseflesh. Dying with hunger, thirst, fatigue, or want of sleep, those unfortunates came to a river bank where they spied wood, fire, provisions, innumerable abandoned wagons, tents, in short, a whole improvised city. The village of Studzianka had been entirely cut up and parcelled out, and transplanted from the heights to the plain. Melancholy and perilous as that city was, its miseries and its dangers attracted those people, who saw naught before them save the terrifying deserts of Russia. In a word, it was a vast hospital, which existed less than twenty hours.

Utter weariness, or an unexpected sense of comfort, rendered that body of men inaccessible to any other thought than that of repose. Although the artillery on the Russian left wing kept up an unremitting fire upon the mass, which stood out distinctly against the snow like a great stain upon it, now black, now flame-colored, the untiring cannonballs seemed to the drowsy multitude simply an additional inconvenience. It was like a storm, whose thunder and lightning were disregarded by all, because it was not likely to strike anybody save a few sick or dying or, perhaps, dead men here and there. Fresh groups of stragglers arrived every moment.

These walking corpses, if we may call them so, separated at once and went about from fire to fire, begging room to lie down; as they were generally repulsed singly, they would join forces anew to obtain by force the hospitality which was denied them. Deaf to the voices of the few officers who told them that they would be dead men on the morrow, they expended the courage and strength it would have required to cross the river in constructing a shelter for one night, in preparing a meal often attended with evil results; the death which awaited them no longer seemed to them an evil, since it allowed them an hour's sleep. They applied the name of *evil* to hunger, thirst, and cold alone. When wood, fire, canvas, shelter, were all pre-empted, horrible conflicts took place between those who arrived late, absolutely denuded, and those who were rich and possessed an abiding-place for the night. The weaker succumbed. There came a time at last when a number of men driven in by the Russians had only the snow for a camping-ground, and lay down upon it to rise no more.

That mass of almost lifeless human beings gradually became so compact, so deaf, so stupid, or it may be so happy, that Maréchal Victor, who had heroically defended them by holding back twenty thousand Russians under Wittgenstein, was obliged to open a passage by actual force through that forest of men in order to lead his five thousand brave fellows across the Bérésina. Those unfortunate creatures allowed themselves to be trampled to death rather than

budge, and died in silence, smiling at their smouldering fires and without a thought of France.

Not until ten o'clock at night did the Duc de Bellune reach the other bank of the river. Before venturing on the bridges which led to Zembin, he intrusted the fate of the rear-guard at Studzianka to Eblé, the savior of all those who survived the disasters of the Bérésina. It was about midnight that that great general, followed by an officer of tried courage, left the little hut which he occupied near the bridge, and gazed upon the spectacle presented by the camp which lay between the bank of the Bérésina and the road leading from Borizof to Studzianka. The Russian guns had ceased firing; innumerable fires, which, in the midst of that wilderness of snow, had a pale look, and seemed to cast no light, shone here and there upon faces in which there was nothing human. Ill-fated mortals, to the number of thirty thousand, belonging to all the nations Napoléon had hurled upon Russia, were lying there, throwing their lives away with brutal indifference.

"Let us save this mob," said the general to his officer. "To-morrow morning the Russians will be masters of Studzianka. We must burn the bridge, therefore, the moment they appear; so, courage, my friend! Make your way through them up to the heights. Tell General Fournier that he has barely time to evacuate his position, force his way through yonder mass, and cross the bridge. When you have seen him start, do you follow him. With the

assistance of a few staunch men, you must burn pitilessly all the tents, wagons, caissons, everything! Drive those fellows yonder onto the bridge! Compel every two-legged creature to take refuge on the other bank. Fire is our last and only resource now. If Berthier had let me destroy those damned baggage-trains, not a soul would have been swallowed up by the river except my poor *pontonni*ers, those fifty heroes who saved the army and who will be forgotten!"

The general put his hand to his face, and was silent. He felt that Poland would be his grave, and that no voice would be raised in favor of those sublime men who threw themselves into the water—the water of the Bérésina!—and remained there to drive in the supports of the bridges. A single one of them still lives, or, to be more exact, suffers, in an obscure village, unknown!

The aide de camp galloped away. That noble-hearted officer had hardly gone fifty paces toward Studzianka, when General Eblé aroused several of his suffering *pontonni*ers and began his charitable task of burning the tents pitched near the bridge, thus compelling the sleepers in the vicinity to cross the Bérésina. Meanwhile, the young aide de camp had found his way, not without difficulty, to the only wooden house still standing in Studzianka.

"Is this old barrack very full, comrade?" he said to a man whom he saw standing outside.

"If you go in, you will be a clever fellow," replied the officer, without turning his head or ceasing to demolish the woodwork of the house with his sword.

"Is that you, Philippe?" said the aide, recognizing the voice of one of his friends.

"Yes.—Aha! it's you, is it, old fellow?" replied Monsieur de Sucy, looking up at the aide de camp, who was, like himself, no more than twenty-three. "I thought you were on the other side of this infernal river. Have you come to bring us some cakes and sweets for our dessert? You will be warmly received," he continued, finally detaching the bark from the wood and giving it, by way of provender, to his horse.

"I am looking for your commanding officer, with a message to him from General Eblé to fall back on Zembin. You have barely time to wade through that mass of corpses whom I am going to set on fire in a moment to make them march."

"You almost warm my blood! your news makes me sweat. I have two friends to save! Ah! old fellow, I should be dead now if it weren't for those two marmots. It's for their sake that I am feeding my horse at this moment, instead of eating him. In pity's name, have you a crust of bread? It's thirty hours since I have put anything in my bread-basket, and I have been beating myself like a madman to retain what little warmth and courage I still have."

"Nothing, my poor Philippe! nothing! But isn't your general here?"

"Don't try to go in! This barn contains our wounded. Go farther on! You will find a sort of pig-sty on your right, and the general is there.



Adieu! my boy. If ever we dance the polka on a Paris floor—”

He did not finish, for there came such a treacherous blast of the north wind at that moment that the aide de camp moved on to avoid freezing, and Major Philippe's lips grew stiff. Soon silence reigned. It was broken only by the groans that came from the house and by the dull noise made by Monsieur de Sucy's mare as she gnawed with frantic hunger the frozen bark from the trees of which the house was built. The major replaced his sword in its sheath, suddenly seized the bridle of the precious animal he had succeeded in preserving, and tore her away, despite her resistance, from the pitiful provender for which she seemed so greedy.

“Forward, Bichette, forward! You are the only one who can save Stéphanie, my beauty. Later on, we shall be allowed to rest and to die, I doubt not.”

Wrapped in a cloak to which he owed his life and his energy, Philippe began to run, stamping his feet on the hard snow to keep the blood in circulation. He had gone barely five hundred paces when he saw a large fire on the spot where he had left his carriage since the morning, in charge of an old soldier. A horrible feeling of anxiety took possession of him. Like all those who, during that disastrous retreat, were dominated by some powerful sentiment, he had at his command, when it was a question of saving his friends, forces which he could not have commanded to provide for his own safety. He soon arrived within a few steps of a depression in the



ground, in which he had bestowed, out of reach of cannon-balls, a young woman who was the friend of his childhood and his dearest treasure.

A few steps from the carriage, some thirty or more stragglers were collected about a huge fire which they fed with planks, caisson bodies, and carriage-wheels and panels. They were, doubtless, the latest comers of all those who formed, as it were, an ocean of faces and fires and huts, a living sea kept in commotion by almost insensible movements, which extended from the broad tract of rolling ground at the foot of Studzianka to the fatal river, and from which there escaped a dull, rustling sound, sometimes mingled with terrible outbursts. Impelled by hunger and desperation, those wretched creatures had evidently taken forcible possession of the carriage. The old general and the young woman whom they found there, lying on piles of clothes, wrapped in cloaks and furs, were at that moment crouching in front of the fire. One of the doors of the carriage was broken. As soon as the men about the fire heard the steps of the horse and the major, there arose a fierce cry inspired by hunger:

“A horse! a horse!”

The voices formed but a single voice.

“Stand back! look out for yourself!” cried two or three soldiers, taking aim at the mare.

Philippe placed himself squarely in front of her, saying:

“Knaves! I’ll throw you all into your fire! There are dead horses up yonder: go and get them!”

"This officer's a joker! Once, twice, will you stand out of the way?" retorted a colossal grenadier. "No? As you please, then!"

A woman's shriek rang out above the report. Philippe luckily was not hit; but Bichette had fallen, and was struggling against death; three men ran to her and finished her with their bayonets.

"Cannibals! let me have my blanket and my pistols," said Philippe, in despair.

"Take your pistols," said the grenadier. "As for the blanket, here's an infantryman who's had nothing to drink for two days, and is shivering to death in his wretched thin coat. He's our general."

Philippe said no more when his attention was called to a man whose shoes were worn out, whose trousers were torn in ten places, and who had nothing on his head but a wretched forage-cap covered with frost. He made haste to take his pistols. Five men dragged the mare in front of the fire and began to cut her up as skilfully as any butcher's apprentice in Paris could have done. The pieces were snatched up and thrown on the coals as if by magic. The major took his place beside the woman who had uttered a shriek of terror on recognizing him; he found her sitting motionless on a cushion from the carriage, warming herself; she gazed at him silently, without a smile. Philippe then saw near at hand the soldier to whom he had intrusted the defence of the carriage; the poor man was wounded. Overwhelmed by numbers, he had yielded at last to the stragglers who attacked him; but, like the dog who

has defended his master's dinner to the last moment, he had accepted his share of the booty, and had made himself a sort of cloak with a white sheet. At that moment, he was engaged in cooking a piece of the mare's flesh, and the major read on his face the joy aroused by the preparations for the feast.

The Comte de Vandières, who had fallen in a senile condition three days before, lay on a cushion beside his wife, and gazed with staring eyes at the flames whose warmth was beginning to conquer his numbness. He had shown no more emotion at Philippe's arrival and danger than at the combat which had resulted in the pillaging of the carriage. First of all, Sucy grasped the young countess's hand as if to testify to his affection and to express the grief he felt in seeing her reduced thus to the last straits; but he said nothing as he seated himself beside her on a mound of snow, which was rapidly melting, and himself yielded to the bliss of feeling warm, forgetting the danger, forgetting everything. His face involuntarily assumed an expression of almost stupid joy, and he waited impatiently until the piece of horse-flesh given to his trooper should be cooked. The odor of that burning meat irritated his hunger, and his hunger imposed silence on his heart, his courage, and his love. He contemplated without anger the results of the pillage of his carriage. The men who sat around the fire had divided the blankets, the cushions, the cloaks, the dresses, the male and female clothing belonging to the count, the countess, and the major. Philippe turned to see if anything

could still be recovered from the box. By the fire-light he saw gold, diamonds, silverware, scattered about; evidently it had not occurred to anyone to appropriate anything of the sort.

Every one of the persons assembled by chance about that fire maintained a silence in which there was something ghastly, and did only what he deemed essential to his own comfort. There was a touch of the grotesque in that misery. The faces, distorted by cold, were overlaid with a coating of mud upon which tears traced from the eyes to the lower part of the cheeks a furrow whose depth showed the thickness of the mask. The filthy condition of their long beards made the soldiers still more hideous. Some were wrapped in women's shawls; others wore saddle-cloths, muddy horse-blankets, rags streaked with melted frost; some had one foot in a boot, the other in a shoe; in fact, there was not one of them whose costume was not laughable in some respect. In presence of such amusing sights, those men remained gloomy and solemn. The silence was broken only by the snapping of the wood or the crackling of the flame, by the far-off murmur of the camp, and by the blows of the swords with which the hungriest were hacking at Bichette's body, trying to obtain the best pieces. A few poor wretches, more exhausted than the rest, were sleeping, and if one of them happened to roll into the fire, no one pulled him out. These strict logicians thought that if he were not dead, his burns would warn him to lie in a safer place. If the poor devil woke in the fire and died,

no one pitied him. Some of the soldiers looked at one another as if to justify their own indifference by the indifference of the others. Twice the young countess witnessed that spectacle and said nothing. When the various pieces that had been placed on the embers were cooked, everyone satisfied his hunger with the gluttony which we consider disgusting when we see it in animals.

"This is the first time you ever saw thirty foot-soldiers on one horse!" cried the grenadier, who had shot the mare.

That was the only jest which afforded a glimpse of the national wit.

Ere long, the majority of the poor fellows rolled themselves in their coats, lay down on boards, on anything that would keep them from touching the snow, and fell asleep, heedless of the morrow. When the major was thoroughly warm and had satisfied his hunger, an irresistible longing for sleep weighed upon his eyelids. During the brief duration of his struggle against that longing, he gazed at the young woman; and as she had turned her face toward the fire to sleep, he could see her closed eyes and a part of her forehead; she was wrapped in a fur-lined pelisse and a heavy dragoon's cloak; her head rested on a pillow spotted with blood; her astrakhan cap, held in place by a handkerchief tied under her chin, protected her face from the cold as far as it was possible to do so; she had hidden her feet in her cloak. Thus rolled into a ball, she really resembled nothing at all. Was this

the last of the *vivandières*? was this that fascinating woman, a lover's crown of glory, the queen of Parisian balls? Alas! even the eye of her most devoted friend could discover nothing feminine in that mass of rags and wraps. Love had succumbed to the cold in a woman's heart. Through the thick veils which irresistible drowsiness stretched before the major's eyes, the husband and wife appeared simply as two specks. The flame of the fire, those recumbent figures, that terrible, icy wind roaring within three steps of an ephemeral warmth, all was a dream. An importunate thought filled Philippe with terror.

"We shall all die if I fall asleep! I will not sleep!" he said to himself.

He slept. A terrible uproar and an explosion aroused him when he had slept an hour. The idea of duty, of his friend's peril, fell suddenly on his heart. He uttered a cry like a roar. He and his soldier alone were on their feet. They saw a sea of flame devouring tents and huts, and sharply outlined against it, in the shadow of the night, a mass of men; they heard outcries, howls of despair; they saw thousands of despondent and frantic faces. In the midst of that hell, a column of soldiers was breaking out a path to the bridge through two rows of corpses.

"It's the retreat of our rear-guard!" exclaimed the major. "No more hope!"

"I have spared your carriage, Philippe," said a friendly voice.

Sucy turned and recognized the young aide de camp by the light of the fire.

"Ah! all is lost," the major replied. "They have eaten my horse. How, in Heaven's name, can I make that stupid general and his wife walk?"

"Take a firebrand, Philippe, and threaten them!"

"Threaten the countess?"

"Adieu!" cried the aide de camp. "I have just time to cross this cursed river, and I must be off: I have a mother in France. What a night! That mob prefers to remain on the snow, and the majority of the wretches would let themselves burn rather than get up. It's four o'clock, Philippe! In two hours the Russians will begin to stir. I promise you that you will see the Bérésina filled with corpses again. Think of yourself, Philippe! You have no horses, you cannot carry the countess; so come with me," he said, taking him by the arm.

"Abandon Stéphanie, my dear fellow!"

He seized the countess, placed her on her feet, shook her with the roughness of a man at his wits' end, and forced her to wake; she stared at him with a fixed, lifeless eye.

"We must go on, Stéphanie, or we shall die here!"

The countess's only reply was to slide to the ground once more, to sleep. The aide de camp seized a firebrand and waved it in front of her face.

"Let us save her in spite of herself!" cried Philippe, lifting the countess and carrying her to the carriage.

He returned and besought his friend's assistance. Between them they took the old general, not knowing whether he was dead or alive, and placed him



beside his wife. The major rolled over with his foot some of the men who were lying near, recovered what they had stolen, heaped all the clothes on the husband and wife, and tossed some roasted strips of his mare's flesh into a corner of the carriage.

"What do you propose to do?" inquired the aide de camp.

"Drag it!" replied the major.

"You are mad!"

"That is true!" cried Philippe, folding his arms across his breast.

Suddenly a plan born of despair seemed to suggest itself to him.

He seized his trooper's uninjured arm.

"I intrust her to you for an hour," he said.

"Remember that you had better die than let anyone approach this carriage."

The major seized the countess's diamonds in one hand, drew his sword with the other, and began to use the flat of it fiercely on those of the sleeping men whom he judged from their appearance to be men of courage; he succeeded in arousing the colossal grenadier and two other men, whose rank it was impossible to distinguish.

"We are in a desperate fix!" he said.

"I know it," replied the grenadier, "but it's all the same to me."

"Well, death for death, isn't it better to sell one's life for a pretty woman and have a chance of seeing France once more?"

"I'd rather sleep," said one of the men, rolling

over on the snow, "and if you bother me any more, major, I'll stick my sabre into your belly."

"What is that you want done, my officer?" said the grenadier. "That man's drunk! He's a Parisian, and likes to take things easy."

"This shall be yours, my gallant grenadier," cried the major, handing him a necklace of diamonds, "if you will follow me and fight like a madman. The Russians are within ten minutes' walk, and they have horses. We will steal up to their first battery and bring off two."

"But the sentinels, major?"

"One of us three—" he began.

He interrupted himself, and glanced at the aide de camp:

"You will come, won't you, Hippolyte?"

Hippolyte assented with a nod.

"One of us," continued the major, "will take charge of the sentinels. Perhaps the infernal Russians are asleep."

"Major, you're a brave man! But you'll take me in your carriage, eh?" said the grenadier.

"Yes, if you don't leave your skin up yonder.—If I should fall, do you, Hippolyte, and you, grenadier," said the major, "promise to devote yourself to the countess's deliverance?"

"Agreed!" cried the grenadier.

They started toward the Russian line, toward the batteries which had so pitilessly assailed the mass of unhappy wretches lying on the river bank. A few moments after their departure, the galloping of two

horses on the snow made itself heard, and the rudely awakened battery discharged volley after volley which passed over the heads of the sleepers; the horses were going at such breakneck speed that their hoof-beats sounded like farriers hammering iron. The generous aide de camp had fallen. The sturdy grenadier was safe and sound. Philippe had received a bayonet-thrust in his shoulder while defending his friend; nevertheless, he clung to the horse's mane, and pressed him so tightly with his legs that the animal was caught in a vise, as it were.

"God be praised!" cried the major, when he found his trooper and the carriage in the same place.

"If you act fairly, officer, you will get the Cross for me. We played a pretty game with the musket and the sword, eh?"

"We have done nothing as yet! Let us harness the horses. Take these ropes."

"There aren't enough."

"Very good, grenadier, just roll these sleeping fellows over, and use their shawls and their linen."

"Ah! this rascal's dead!" cried the grenadier, stripping the first one he touched. "What a game! they're all dead!"

"All of them?"

"Yes, all! It seems that horse-meat is indigestible when you eat it served on snow."

The words made Philippe shudder. The cold had become much more severe.

"O God! to think of losing a woman whom I have already saved twenty times!"

He shook the countess once more, crying:

“Stéphanie! Stéphanie!”

The young woman opened her eyes.

“Madame, we are saved!”

“Saved!” she repeated, falling back.

The horses were harnessed to the carriage after a fashion. The major, holding his sword in his best hand and the reins in the other, and with his pistols in his belt, mounted one horse, the grenadier the other. The old soldier, whose feet were frozen, had been thrown into the carriage across the general and the countess. Maddened by blows with the sword, the horses rushed furiously down into the level plain where innumerable difficulties awaited the major. It soon became impossible to go forward without danger of crushing men, women, and even sleeping children, one and all of whom refused to stir when the grenadier aroused them. In vain did Monsieur de Sucy seek the lane which the rear-guard had lately made through that mass of men; it was effaced as completely as the wake of a ship at sea; he could move no faster than a walk, and was frequently brought to a standstill by soldiers who threatened to kill his horses.

“Do you want to reach the river?” said the grenadier.

“At the cost of all my blood! at the cost of the whole world!” replied the major.

“Forward, then!—You can’t make an omelet without breaking eggs.”

And the grenadier of the Guard drove the horses

upon the men in their path, stained the wheels with blood, overturned tents, cutting a double furrow of dead bodies across that field of heads. But let us do him the justice to say that he never forgot to shout in a voice of thunder:

“Out of the way, carrion!”

“Poor devils!” said the major.

“Pshaw! it was either the frost or the cannon!” said the grenadier, urging on his horses by pricking them with the point of his sword.

A catastrophe which might well have happened to them much sooner, but from which fabulous good luck had hitherto preserved them, suddenly arrested their progress. The carriage tipped over.

“I expected it,” cried the imperturbable grenadier. “Aha! our comrade is dead.”

“Poor Laurent!” said the major.

“Laurent! Wasn’t he of the Fifth Chasseurs?”

“Yes.”

“He was my cousin. Bah! this devil of a life isn’t happy enough for one to regret the loss of it in these days.”

The carriage was not righted and the horses set free without an immense and irreparable loss of time. The shock was so severe that the young countess, awakened and aroused from her benumbed state by the commotion, threw off her coverings, and rose.

“Where are we, Philippe?” she asked in a sweet voice, looking about her.

“Within five hundred yards of the bridge. We are going to cross the Bérésina. When we are on

the other side, Stéphanie, I won't torment you any more, I will let you sleep; we shall be safe then, and can go quietly on to Vilna. God grant that you may never know what your life will have cost!"

"Are you wounded?"

"It is nothing."

The hour of the catastrophe had arrived. The guns of the Russians announced the approach of day. They had taken possession of Studzianka, and were sweeping the plain; and by the first gleams of dawn the major saw their columns in motion and forming on the heights. A shout of alarm arose from the disorderly multitude, which was on its feet in an instant. One and all instinctively realized the danger, and they crowded toward the bridge with a wave-like movement. The Russians came down with the velocity of fire. Men, women, children, horses, all were moving toward the bridge. Luckily, the major and the countess were still at some distance from the bank. General Eblé had set fire to the piers of the bridge on the other side. Notwithstanding the warnings shouted at those who were swarming upon that plank of salvation, not one would turn back. Not only did the bridge go down laden with people, but the impetus of that great multitude of men rushing toward the fatal bank was so violent that a mass of humanity was hurled into the stream like an avalanche. Not a cry was heard, but a dull splash as if made by an enormous stone falling into the water; then the Bérésina was covered with dead bodies. The retrograde movement of those who drew back upon

the plain to avoid that horrible death was so violent, and the shock with which they collided with those who were still moving forward was so terrible, that a great number died of suffocation. The Comte and Comtesse de Vandières owed their lives to their carriage. The horses, after having crushed and trampled a mass of dying men, were themselves crushed and trampled to death by the human deluge rushing toward the shore. The major and the grenadier found their salvation in their strength. They killed to avoid being killed. That hurricane of human faces, that ebb and flow of bodies moved by the same impulse, resulted in leaving the bank of the Bérésina deserted for a few moments. The multitude had turned back into the plain. Some few men who threw themselves into the river from the bank, did so less in the hope of reaching the other bank, which to them meant France, than to avoid the deserts of Siberia. Despair became an ægis for some courageous men. One officer leaped from one piece of floating ice to another to the other bank; a soldier crawled up upon a heap of dead bodies and cakes of ice, as if by a miracle. That immense horde realized at last that the Russians would not kill twenty thousand unarmed, dazed, benumbed men, who did not defend themselves, and they awaited their fate with horrible resignation. Thereupon, the major, the grenadier, the old general, and his wife were left alone, a few steps from the spot where the bridge had been. They stood there silent, dry-eyed, surrounded by a wilderness of corpses. A few uninjured



soldiers, a few officers whose energy was fully restored by the emergency, were near them. There were about fifty men in all. About two hundred yards away, the major spied the ruins of the bridge built for vehicles, which had been destroyed the night before.

“Let us build a raft!” he cried.

The words were barely out of his mouth when the whole party hurried toward the ruins. The men began to collect iron clamps, pieces of wood, ropes,—in a word, all the materials necessary for the construction of a raft. A score of soldiers and officers, well armed and commanded by the major, formed a guard to protect the workers against the desperate attacks which the mob might make on detecting their plan. The longing for liberty which animates prisoners and enables them to perform miracles cannot be compared with the feeling which inspired those hapless Frenchmen at that moment.

“Here come the Russians! here come the Russians!” the defending party shouted to the raft-builders.

And the wood cried aloud, the raft increased in width and length and depth. Generals, colonels, privates, all bent beneath the weight of wheels, iron bars, ropes, and planks: it was a reproduction in real life of the building of Noah’s Ark. The young countess, sitting beside her husband, looked on at the spectacle with a feeling of regret at her inability to help on the work; she did, however, assist in making knots to strengthen the ropes. At last, the raft

was finished. Forty men thrust it into the river, while some ten or twelve soldiers held the ropes by which it was to be made fast to the bank. As soon as the builders saw their craft fairly afloat on the Bérésina, they threw themselves from the bank with horrible selfishness. The major, dreading the frenzy of that first impulse, held Stéphanie and the general by the hand; but he shuddered when he saw that the raft was black with people, and that men were crowded upon it like spectators in the pit at a theatre.

“Savages!” he cried, “it was I who suggested the idea of building a raft; I am the one who saved you, and you refuse me a place!”

A confused murmur was the only reply. The men on the edges of the raft were provided with poles which they placed against the bank and pushed vigorously in order to give the frail craft an impetus that would send it across the river through the dead bodies and the floating ice.

“*Tonnerre de Dieu!* I’ll pitch you into the water if you don’t take on the major and his two friends,” cried the grenadier, and he raised his sword, prevented their leaving the bank, and made them crowd closer together, disregarding their horrible cries.

“I am falling!—I am falling!” his companions yelled. “Let us go! push off!”

The major glanced dry-eyed at his mistress, who raised her eyes heavenward in sublime resignation.

“To die with you!” she said.

There was something comical in the plight of the men on the raft. Although they uttered frightful

howls of rage, not one of them dared resist the grenadier; for they were so crowded, that to push anyone of them would have been enough to upset them all. In that perilous condition of affairs, a captain tried to rid them of the grenadier, who detected his hostile movement, seized him, and threw him into the water, saying:

“Ah! my duck, so you want to drink, do you?—There you go!—Here is room for two!” he cried. “Come, major, throw us your little woman, and come yourself! Leave that old dotard, he’ll be dead by to-morrow.”

“Make haste!” cried a voice composed of a hundred voices.

“Come on, major! These fellows are growling, and they’re right.”

The Comte de Vandières threw off his rags, and stood erect in his general’s uniform.

“Let us save the count,” said Philippe.

Stéphanie pressed her lover’s hand, threw herself upon him, and strained him to her heart in a desperate embrace.

“Adieu!” she said.

They had understood each other.

The Comte de Vandières recovered his faculties and his presence of mind sufficiently to leap aboard the raft, whither Stéphanie followed him after a last glance at Philippe.

“Will you take my place, major?” cried the grenadier. “I don’t care a fig for my life; I have neither wife nor child nor mother.”

"I place them in your care," cried the major, indicating the count and his wife.

"Never fear, I will take care of them as of my own eye."

The raft was impelled so fiercely toward the bank opposite that on which Philippe stood motionless, that it struck with a force which shook it from stem to stern. The count, who was on the edge, rolled into the river. As he fell, a piece of floating ice cut off his head, and whirled it away like a cannon-ball.

"Look, major!" cried the grenadier.

"Adieu!" cried a woman's voice.

Philippe de Sucey fell to the ground, horror-stricken, overwhelmed by cold, by regret, and by fatigue.



\*

“My poor niece had gone mad,” said the doctor, after a moment’s silence.—“Ah! monsieur,” he added, grasping Monsieur d’Albon’s hand, “what a terrible burden life has been to that little woman, so young and so delicately nurtured! Having been separated, by incredible ill-fortune, from the grenadier of the Guard,—his name was Fleuriot,—she was dragged about for two years in the wake of the army, the plaything of a crowd of miserable knaves. She went about barefooted and half-clothed, so I was told, and for whole months at a time was entirely without care or proper sustenance; sometimes kept in the hospitals, sometimes driven out like a wild beast. God alone knows the miseries which that unfortunate creature lived through. She was in a small town in Germany, confined with lunatics, while her parents, who believed her dead, divided up her property here. In 1816, Fleuriot, the grenadier, recognized her in an inn at Strasbourg, whither she had gone after escaping from her prison. Some peasants told the grenadier that the countess had lived a whole month in the woods, and that they had tracked her about, trying to catch her, but without success. I was at that time within a few leagues of Strasbourg. Hearing some talk about a wild girl, I had a desire to ascertain the exact facts which had given rise to the absurd fables then current. Imagine

my feelings when I recognized the countess! Fleuriot told me all that he knew of her pitiful story. I took the poor man with my niece to Auvergne, where I had the misfortune to lose him. He had some little influence over Madame de Vandières. Nobody but he could induce her to dress. *Adieu!* the one word which is to her the whole language, she used to say very rarely. Fleuriot undertook to rouse some ideas in her mind, but he failed; the only result was to make her say that melancholy word a little oftener. The grenadier was able to divert her mind and to interest her by playing with her, and I hoped great things from him; but—”

Stéphanie’s uncle was silent for a moment.

“Here,” he continued, “she has found another creature whom she seems to understand. It is an idiot peasant woman, who, notwithstanding her stupidity and her ugliness, once loved a mason. This mason was willing to marry her because she owned a few rods of land. Poor Geneviève was the happiest creature on earth for a year. She wore her best clothes and danced with Dallot on Sundays; she understood what love meant; there was room in her heart and her mind for sentiment. But Dallot thought better of it. He found a girl who has her senses and a little more land than Geneviève. So Dallot left Geneviève. The poor creature lost what little mind love had developed in her, and no longer knows how to do anything more than watch cows and trim grass. My niece and the poor girl are united in a certain sense by the invisible chain of their common



destiny, and by the sentiment which caused their madness.—Look!” said Stéphanie’s uncle, leading Monsieur d’Albon to the window.

The magistrate saw the pretty countess sitting on the ground between Geneviève’s legs. The peasant, armed with an enormous horn comb, was devoting her undivided attention to the task of untangling Stéphanie’s long black hair, upon which the countess allowed her to work her will, uttering stifled cries in a tone which denoted instinctive enjoyment. Monsieur d’Albon shuddered when he observed the unconstraint and the animal nonchalance which betrayed an entire absence of mental power.

“O Philippe! Philippe!” he cried, “your past misfortunes are nothing.—Is there no hope?” he asked.

The doctor raised his eyes to heaven.

“Adieu, monsieur,” said Monsieur d’Albon, pressing the old man’s hand. “My friend awaits my return; you will soon see him.”

“So it is really she?” cried Sucey, when he had heard the Marquis d’Albon’s first words. “Ah! I thought as much!” he added, while the tears gathered in his black eyes, which were usually so stern.

“Yes, she is the Comtesse de Vandières,” replied the magistrate.

The colonel suddenly sprang out of bed, and dressed himself in haste.

“Well, well, Philippe,” said the wondering magistrate, “are you going mad, too?”

"Why, I am no longer ill," replied the colonel, simply. "This news has allayed all my pains, and what disease could make itself felt when I am thinking of Stéphanie? I am going to the Bons-Hommes, to see her, to speak to her, to cure her. She is free: you will see that happiness will smile upon us, or else there is no Providence. Do you really believe that that poor woman can hear my voice and not recover her reason?"

"She has already seen you without recognizing you," rejoined the magistrate, gently; for, when he observed his friend's extravagant hope, he tried to inspire a salutary doubt in his mind.

The colonel started; but the next moment he began to laugh with an incredulous gesture. No one dared to oppose his plan. In a few hours he was settled at the old priory with the physician and Comtesse de Vandières.

"Where is she?" he cried, when he arrived.

"Hush!" replied Monsieur Fanjat, Stéphanie's uncle. "She is asleep. See, there she is."

Philippe saw the poor madwoman lying on a bench in the sunlight. Her head was protected from the intense heat by a forest of hair scattered over her face; her arms were hanging gracefully, and her hands touched the ground; the pose of her body was as graceful as that of a deer; her feet were bent under her without effort; her bosom rose and fell regularly; her skin, her complexion, had that porcelain-like whiteness which so arouses our admiration in children. Geneviève sat quietly beside her,

holding a twig which Stéphanie had probably broken from the topmost branch of some poplar, and waving it softly over her sleeping companion's face, to drive away the flies and cool the air. The peasant glanced at Monsieur Fanjat and the colonel; then, like an animal who has recognized its master, she slowly turned her head toward the countess and continued to watch over her, without having given the least sign of surprise or intelligence. The air was intensely hot. The stone bench seemed to glow, and the open field sent skyward those sportive vapors which flutter and flash above the grass like golden dust; but Geneviève seemed unconscious of the consuming heat. The colonel grasped the doctor's hands fiercely in his. Tears started from his eyes, rolled down his virile cheeks, and fell upon the grass at Stéphanie's feet.

"Monsieur," said the uncle, "for two years my heart has been broken every day. Soon you will be like me. If you do not weep, you will feel your grief none the less."

"You have cared for her!" said the colonel, whose eyes expressed no less jealousy than gratitude.

The two men understood each other; and again they grasped each other's hand in a firm grasp, and stood, without speaking or moving, gazing at that charming creature, so beautifully placid and calm in sleep. From time to time, she uttered a sigh, and that sigh, which had every appearance of rationality, made the poor colonel tremble with gladness.

"Alas!" said Monsieur Fanjat, softly, "do not

deceive yourself, monsieur; at this moment, she is in full possession of her reason."

Those persons who have stood enraptured for hours watching the slumber of one dearly loved, whose eyes were certain to smile upon them when they awoke, will, doubtless, comprehend the sweet yet agonizing emotion which stirred the colonel. To him, that sleep was an illusion; the awakening would be death, and the most horrible of all deaths. Suddenly a young kid came bounding toward the bench and sniffed at Stéphanie, who was awakened by the sound; she sprang lightly to her feet, a movement which did not frighten the capricious creature; but when her eyes fell upon Philippe, she ran away, followed by her four-footed companion, to a hedge of elder-trees; then she uttered once more the cry like that of a frightened bird which the colonel had heard near the gate when the countess first appeared to Monsieur d'Albon. At last, she climbed a laburnum-tree, seated herself amid the green foliage, and began to stare at the *stranger* with the eager scrutiny of the most inquisitive nightingale in the forest.

"Adieu! adieu! adieu!" she said, but the mind did not communicate the slightest significant inflection to the word.

She was as impassive as a bird whistling his only melody.

"She does not recognize me!" cried the colonel, in despair. "Stéphanie, it is Philippe, your Philippe!—Philippe!"

The poor fellow walked toward the laburnum; but when he was within a few feet of the tree, the countess glared at him as if to defy him, although a sort of fearful expression crept into her eye; then, with a single spring, she passed from the laburnum to an acacia, and thence to a northern fir, where she swung from branch to branch with incredible agility.

“Don’t chase her,” said Monsieur Fanjat to the colonel. “You will place between yourself and her an aversion which may become an insurmountable barrier; I will help you to make yourself known to her and to tame her. Come and sit on this bench. If you pay no heed to the poor creature, you will soon see her coming nearer and nearer to examine you.”

“To think that *she* should fail to recognize me and should fly from me!” exclaimed the colonel, seating himself with his back against a tree whose dense foliage shaded a rustic bench.

His head fell forward on his breast. The doctor did not speak. Soon the countess descended slowly from the topmost branches of her fir-tree, fluttering about like a will-o’-the-wisp, sometimes stopping to swing on the branches with the wind. She stopped on each branch to watch the stranger; but, seeing that he did not move, she leaped lightly to the grass at last, stood erect, and walked slowly toward him across the field. When she had taken her position against a tree about ten feet from the bench, Monsieur Fanjat whispered to the colonel:

"Take some lumps of sugar quietly from my pocket and show them to her; she will come to you; I will gladly renounce in your favor the pleasure of giving her sweets. With the aid of sugar, of which she is passionately fond, you can accustom her to come to you and recognize you."

"When she was a woman," said Philippe, sadly, "she had no taste for sweet things."

When the colonel held out a lump of sugar to Stéphanie between the thumb and forefinger of his right hand, she uttered her savage cry anew and ran eagerly toward him; then she stopped, paralyzed by the instinctive fear he caused her; she looked at the sugar and turned her head away alternately, like an unfortunate dog whose master forbids him to touch a piece of meat until he has reached the last letter of the alphabet, which he recites with great moderation. At last, animal passion triumphed over fear: Stéphanie rushed at Philippe, timidly put out her little brown hand to grasp her prey, touched her lover's fingers, seized the sugar, and disappeared in a clump of trees. That frightful scene was too much for the colonel, who burst into tears and fled to the salon.

"Pray, is love less courageous than friendship?" said Monsieur Fanjat. "I have hope, monsieur le baron. My poor niece has been in a much more deplorable condition than this in which you see her."

"Is it possible?" cried Philippe.

"She used to remain naked," continued the doctor.

The colonel turned pale, and made a horrified gesture; the doctor thought that he recognized in

that pallor some ominous symptoms; he felt his pulse, and found him in a violent fever; by persistent urging, he succeeded in inducing him to go to bed, and prepared a slight dose of opium to insure him a quiet night's sleep.

A week passed away, during which Baron de Sucey was constantly in the throes of the most intense mental anguish; and soon his tears were exhausted. His sorely bruised heart could not accustom itself to the spectacle presented by the countess's malady; but he compromised, so to speak, with his painful situation, and found compensations in his suffering. His heroism knew no bounds. He had the courage to try to tame Stéphanie, by selecting the choicest sweetmeats for her; he took so much pains about bringing them to her, he showed so much tact in adapting the modest conquests that he tried to make over his mistress's instinct, that last remaining shred of her intelligence, that he succeeded in making her tamer than she had ever been. He went down into the park every morning; and if, after a long search for the countess, he could not fix on the tree in which she was gently swinging, or the nook wherein she had lain down to play with a bird, or upon what part of the roof she had perched, he would whistle the famous air *Partant pour la Syrie*, which was connected with the memory of one of their love-scenes. Stéphanie would at once come running to him with the grace and lightness of a swan. She had become so accustomed to the colonel's presence that he no longer frightened her; soon she ventured



to sit on his knee, to throw her slender, nervous arm around his neck. In that attitude, so dear to lovers, Philippe would give the dainty countess sweetmeats one by one. And after she had eaten them all, she would frequently search her friend's pockets with movements as rapid and as mechanical as those of a monkey. When she was sure that he had nothing more, she would gaze at him with a limpid eye in which there was no trace of ideas or of recognition; then she would play with him; she would try to take off his boots to see his feet, she would tear his gloves, put on his hat; but she allowed him to pass his hands through her hair, to take her in his arms, and received from him burning kisses with no sign of pleasure; she gazed at him in silence when he shed tears; she understood the whistling of *Partant pour la Syrie*, but he could not succeed in making her utter her own name, Stéphanie. Philippe was sustained in his heart-rending undertaking by a hope which never forsook him. If, on a lovely autumn morning, he spied the countess sitting quietly on a bench beneath a yellowing poplar, the unhappy lover would lie at her feet and gaze into her eyes as long as she would look at him, hoping that the light which came from them would become the light of intelligence; sometimes he would delude himself with the thought that those rigid, impassive gleams began to vibrate once more, changed to softer, living rays, and he would cry:

“Stéphanie! Stéphanie! you hear me, you see me!”

But she listened to that voice as she listened to any noise, to the rustling of the wind among the trees, to the lowing of the cow on whose back she climbed; and the colonel would wring his hands in despair, despair constantly renewed. The lapse of time and these fruitless experiments served only to augment his suffering. One calm evening, amid the silence and peace of that country retreat, Monsieur Fanjat spied the baron in the distance loading a pistol. The old doctor understood from that that Philippe had lost hope; he felt all his blood rush back to his heart, but he conquered the fit of dizziness which assailed him, because he preferred to see his niece alive and insane rather than dead. He hurried to the colonel's side.

"What are you doing?" he said.

"That is for myself," the colonel replied, pointing to a loaded pistol on the bench; "and this is for her!" he added, as he rammed the charge home in the weapon he held in his hand.

The countess was lying on the ground, playing with a ball.

"You do not know, it seems," rejoined the doctor, coolly, dissembling his alarm, "that last night in her sleep she said: 'Philippe.'"

"She called my name!" said the baron, dropping his pistol, which Stéphanie picked up; but he snatched it from her hands, seized the one that lay on the bench, and rushed away.

"Poor darling!" cried the doctor, delighted with the success of his stratagem.

He pressed the mad girl to his bosom, and continued:

“He would have killed you, the selfish creature! He wants to kill you, because he is unhappy. He doesn’t love you for your own sake, my child! We will forgive him, won’t we? He is mad, and you are only foolish. God alone, I tell you, has the right to call you to Him. We fancy that you are unhappy because you no longer share in our miseries, fools that we are! But,” he said, taking her on his knee, “you are happy, nothing troubles you; you live like the bird, like the deer.”

She pounced on a young blackbird which was leaping from twig to twig, seized it with a little shriek of delight, wrung its neck, saw that it was dead, and left it at the foot of a tree without another thought.

The next day, at dawn, the colonel went down into the garden, looking for Stéphanie, believing that happiness was at hand; not finding her, he whistled. When his mistress had come, he took her arm, and they walked together for the first time, entering an arbor formed by arching trees whose fading leaves were falling in the morning breeze. The colonel sat down, and Stéphanie, of her own motion, took her place on his knee. Philippe trembled with excitement.

“My love,” he said, kissing her hands ardently, “I am Philippe—”

She looked at him with interest.

“Come,” he added, embracing her. “Do you

feel my heart beat? It never beat for any other than you. I love you still. Philippe is not dead, he is here, you are sitting on his knee. You are my Stéphanie, and I am your Philippe!"

"Adieu!" she said, "adieu!"

The colonel shuddered, for he thought he could see that his excitement was infecting his mistress. His heart-rending cry, inspired by hope, that supreme effort of an undying love, of a frantic passion, awakened his mistress's reason.

"Ah! Stéphanie, how happy we will be!"

She uttered an exclamation of satisfaction, and there was a vague gleam of intelligence in her eyes.

"She knows me! Stéphanie!"

He felt that his heart was swollen to bursting, his eyes became moist. But suddenly the countess held up a tiny piece of sugar which she had found by searching him while he talked. So he had taken for a human thought that degree of intelligence which a monkey's mischief presupposes.—Philippe swooned. Monsieur Fanjat found the countess sitting on his body. She was nibbling her sugar, displaying her pleasure by antics which would have been voted charming, if, when she had her reason, she had jokingly attempted to imitate her parrot or her cat.

"Ah! my friend," cried Philippe, when he recovered consciousness, "I die every day, every moment! I love her too dearly! I could endure anything if she had a single feminine characteristic in her madness. But to find her always like a wild woman, even without a trace of modesty; to see—"

“So you would have preferred an operatic madness,” said the doctor, bitterly, “and your loving devotion is subject to worldly prejudices? Why, monsieur, I have renounced in your favor the melancholy pleasure of feeding my niece, I have abandoned to you the joy of playing with her, I have kept for myself only the heaviest burdens.—While you sleep, I keep watch over her, I— Come, monsieur, give her up. Leave this depressing retreat. I know how to live with the dear little creature, I understand her madness, I watch her every movement, I am in her secrets. Some day you will thank me.”

The colonel left the Bons-Hommes, to return but once. The doctor was shocked at the effect he had produced on his guest, for he was beginning to love him as dearly as he loved his niece. If either of the two lovers were deserving of pity, it certainly was Philippe: he had to bear alone the burden of a most terrible sorrow! The doctor made inquiries concerning him, and learned that the poor fellow had fled for refuge to an estate that he owned near Saint-Germain. On the faith of a dream, the colonel had formed a plan to restore the countess's reason. Without the doctor's knowledge, he employed the rest of the autumn in making his preparations for that tremendous undertaking. A small stream ran through his park, and in winter overflowed a large swamp not unlike that which extended along the right bank of the Bérésina. The village of Satout, situated on a small hill, overlooked the swamp, and completed the framework of this scene of horror,

as Studzianka overlooked the plain of the Bérésina. The colonel hired men to dig a canal to represent the greedy stream in which the treasures of France, Napoléon and his army, were lost. With the assistance of his memory, Philippe succeeded in reproducing in his park the bank from which General Eblé had built his bridges. He planted piers and burned them, so as to represent the blackened, half-burned timbers on either side of the river, which had told the stragglers that the road to France was closed to them. The colonel caused a mass of débris to be brought thither, similar to that which his companions in misfortune had used to build their raft. He ruined his park in order to perfect the illusion upon which he founded his last hope. He ordered a quantity of dilapidated uniforms in which to array several hundreds of peasants. He built cabins, erected tents and batteries, and set fire to them. In short, he omitted nothing which could help to reproduce the most ghastly of scenes, and he accomplished his object. In the early days of December, when the snow had covered the earth with a thick white mantle, he fancied that he had the Bérésina before him. That false Russia was so startlingly true to life, that several of his companions in arms recognized the scene of their former miseries. Monsieur de Sucy kept the secret of this tragic performance, which several different social circles in Paris discussed as a proof of madness.

One day, early in January, 1820, the colonel entered a carriage similar to that in which Monsieur

and Madame de Vandières had travelled from Moscow to Studzianka, and drove toward the forest of Isle-Adam. It was drawn by horses closely resembling those he had brought away from the Russian camp at the risk of his life. He wore the outlandish, travel-stained clothing, the hat, and the weapons which he wore on the 29th of November, 1812. He had even allowed his beard and hair to grow, and neglected his face, so that no element of the ghastly truth might be lacking.

"I guessed your plan," cried Monsieur Fanjat, when the colonel alighted from his carriage. "If you wish it to succeed, don't show yourself in this equipage. To-night I will give my niece a little opium. While she is asleep, we will dress her as she was dressed at Studzianka, and put her in this carriage. I will follow you in a berlin."

About two in the morning, the young countess was taken to the carriage and laid upon cushions, with a coarse blanket thrown over her. Several peasants held torches to light this strange kidnapping. Suddenly a piercing shriek rang out in the silence of the night. Philippe and the doctor turned, and saw Geneviève, half-naked, coming from the room on the ground-floor, in which she slept.

"Adieu, adieu, it's all over! adieu!" she cried, weeping bitterly.

"Why, what's the matter, Geneviève?" said Monsieur Fanjat.

Geneviève shook her head despairingly, threw up her hands, looked at the carriage, uttered a long



howl, with visible symptoms of profound terror, and silently returned to the house.

"That is a good omen!" cried the colonel. "That girl regrets the loss of her companion. Perhaps she *sees* that Stéphanie is going to recover her reason."

"God grant it!" said Monsieur Fanjat, who seemed much affected by the incident.

Since he had devoted himself exclusively to the study of madness, he had fallen in with several examples of the prophetic spirit and gift of second-sight of which insane persons have given proof, and which are found, according to some travellers, among savage tribes.

As the colonel had calculated, Stéphanie crossed the fictitious plain of the Bérésina about nine in the morning; she was awakened by a bomb which exploded about a hundred paces from the spot where the tragedy was to be enacted. That was the signal. A thousand peasants set up a frightful outcry, like the roar of despair which appalled the Russians when twenty thousand stragglers found themselves by their own fault doomed to death or slavery. At that explosion, at that outcry, the countess leaped out of the carriage, ran with frantic excitement about the snow-covered field, saw the burned huts, and the fatal raft being launched on the icy Bérésina. Major Philippe was there, brandishing his sword amid the throng. Madame de Vandières uttered a cry which made all hearts stand still, and took her place in front of the colonel, whose blood surged madly through his veins. She seemed to be collecting her

thoughts, and gazed, vaguely at first, at that strange picture. For one instant, as brief as the lightning-flash, her eyes had the unintelligent lucidity which we admire in the eyes of a bird; then she passed her hand across her forehead with the intense expression of a person in meditation, she gazed upon that living memory, that episode of her past reproduced before her, turned her face quickly toward Philippe, and *saw him!* An awful silence reigned amid that crowd. The colonel gasped for breath and dared not speak, the doctor wept. Stéphanie's lovely face flushed slightly; then, by slow degrees, it resumed at last the brilliant coloring of a young girl in the bloom of youth. Her cheeks were tinged with a lovely, rich shade of red. Life and happiness, kindled by ebullient intelligence, crept nearer and nearer, like a conflagration. A convulsive trembling spread from her feet to her heart. And these phenomena, which appeared in an instant, had, as it were, a common bond of union when Stéphanie's eyes flashed forth a celestial ray, a living spark. She lived, she thought! She shivered, perhaps with terror. God himself set free a second time that lifeless tongue and cast anew His fire into that extinct mind. Human will returned with its magnetic torrents, and vivified that body from which it had been absent so long.

"Stéphanie!" cried the colonel.

"Oh! it is Philippe!" said the poor countess.

She threw herself into the trembling arms which the colonel held out to her, and the embrace of the two lovers struck awe to the hearts of the spectators.

Stéphanie burst into tears. Suddenly her tears ceased to flow, she became as like a corpse as if the lightning from heaven had struck her, and said in a feeble voice:

“Adieu, Philippe!—I love you. Adieu!”

“Oh! she is dead!” cried the colonel, opening his arms.

The old doctor received his niece’s lifeless body, kissed her as a young man would have done, lifted her, and carried her to a pile of wood, where he sat down. He examined her carefully, and placed a feeble, convulsively trembling hand upon her heart. That heart had ceased to beat.

“Can it be true?” he said, glancing from the colonel’s motionless form to Stéphanie’s face, to which death imparted that resplendent beauty, a fleeting halo, the pledge, perhaps, of a glorious future.—“Yes, she is dead!”

“Ah! that smile!” cried Philippe. “See that smile! Is it possible?”

“She is already cold,” replied Monsieur Fanjat.

Monsieur de Sucy walked away a few steps, as if to tear himself from that horrible sight, but stopped, whistled the air that the madwoman understood, and, finding that his mistress did not run to him, staggered away like a drunken man, still whistling, but did not turn again.

General Philippe de Sucy was considered in society a very amiable man, and especially a very jovial spirit. A few days ago a lady complimented him on his good humor and his even disposition.

"Ah! madame," he said, "I pay very dearly for my jests at night, when I am alone."

"Why, are you ever alone?"

"No," he replied, with a smile.

If a judicious observer of human nature had seen the expression on Sucy's face at that moment, he would have shuddered, I doubt not.

"Why don't you marry?" continued the lady in question, who had several daughters at a boarding-school. "You are rich, titled, of the very oldest nobility; you have talents, brilliant prospects, everything smiles upon you."

"Yes," he replied, "but it is a smile that is killing me."

The next day the lady was surprised to learn that Monsieur de Sucy had blown out his brains during the night. The first society took diverse views of that extraordinary event, and everyone tried to ascertain the motive. Gambling, love, ambition, hidden dissipation, explained the catastrophe, the last scene of a drama begun in 1812, according to the taste of each searcher for light. Two men only, a magistrate and an old doctor, knew that Monsieur de Sucy was one of those strong men to whom God gives the unfortunate power of coming forth triumphant day after day from a frightful combat with some unknown monster. Let God withdraw His powerful hand from them but a moment, and they succumb.

Paris, March 1830.

## THE CONSCRIPT

" Sometimes they saw him, by a phenomenon of vision or of locomotion, abolish space in its two elements of time and distance, one of which is intellectual, the other physical."

*Intellectual History of Louis Lambert.*



*TO MY DEAR FRIEND ALBERT MARCHAND DE LA  
RIBELLERIE*







On a certain evening in the month of November, 1793, the principal personages of the town of Carentan were assembled in the salon of Madame de Dey, where the *assembly* was held every day. Divers circumstances which would have attracted little attention in a large city, but which were of a nature to cause much excitement in a small town, imparted to this meeting an unaccustomed interest. Two days earlier, Madame de Dey had closed her doors to her circle of intimates, whom she had also excused herself from receiving on the day before, on the ground of indisposition. In ordinary times, that incident would have produced much the same effect at Carentan as would be produced in Paris by closing all the theatres. In those days, existence was in a certain sense incomplete. But in 1793 Madame de Dey's conduct might have had the most deplorable results. The least venturesome proceeding on the part of the nobles proved almost always to be a question of life or death. To understand fully the intense curiosity and the narrow-minded cunning which gave animation to all those Norman faces on the evening in question, and more especially in order to understand Madame de Dey's secret perplexities, it becomes necessary to explain the rôle which she played at Carentan. The critical position in which

she found herself at that moment being identical with that of very many persons during the Revolution, the sympathies of more than one reader will add the touch of color necessary to this narrative.

Madame de Dey, the widow of a lieutenant-general, a chevalier of various orders, had left the court at the beginning of the Emigration. As she possessed considerable property in the neighborhood of Carentan, she had taken refuge there, hoping that the influence of the Terror would be felt but little at that distance from Paris. That calculation, based upon a thorough knowledge of the province, proved to be just. The Revolution did little damage in Lower Normandie. Although Madame de Dey used to consort with none but the noble families of the province when she came there to inspect her property, she had, as a matter of policy, thrown her house open to the principal bourgeois of the town and to the newly constituted authorities, exerting herself to make them proud of their conquest of her, without arousing either jealousy or hatred in their hearts. Gracious and amiable, blessed with that indescribable sweetness of manner which has the art of pleasing without resorting to self-abasement or entreaty, she had succeeded in winning general esteem by an exquisite tact whose sage counsels enabled her to walk steadfastly on the narrow line where she could satisfy the demands of that conglomerate society, without humbling the sensitive self-esteem of the parvenus, or offending that of her former friends.

She was about thirty-eight years old, and still retained, not that fresh, ripe beauty which distinguishes the maidens of Lower Normandie, but a slender and, so to speak, aristocratic beauty. Her features were refined and delicate; her figure, flexible and graceful. When she spoke, her pale face seemed to light up and take a new life. Her great black eyes were overflowing with amiability, but their calm, devout expression seemed to indicate that the mainspring of her existence was no longer within her. Married in the bloom of youth to an elderly, jealous soldier, the falseness of her position in the midst of a dissipated court contributed, doubtless, to extend a veil of serious melancholy over a face which the charms and vivacity of love must formerly have made resplendent. Compelled constantly to repress the artless impulses, the emotions of a woman at a time when she feels instead of reflecting, passion had retained its virgin purity in the depths of her heart. So that her principal attraction was due to the youthful innocence which her features betrayed at times, and which gave to her thoughts an ingenuous expression of desire. Her appearance enjoined respect, but there was always in her bearing, in her voice, the yearning impulse toward an unknown future, as in a young girl; the most unimpressionable man soon found himself in love with her, and, nevertheless, maintained an attitude of timid respect, inspired by her polished manners, which were most imposing. Her heart, innately noble, and fortified by bitter struggles, seemed too

far removed from the common herd, and men acknowledged their inferiority.

That heart necessarily demanded an exalted passion. So that Madame de Dey's affections were concentrated in a single sentiment, that of maternity. The happiness and the enjoyment of which her life as a wife had been deprived, she found in her passionate love for her son. She loved him not only with the pure, profound love of a mother, but with the coquetry of a mistress, with the jealousy of a wife. She was unhappy when she was parted from him, uneasy during his absence, never saw enough of him, lived only through him and for him. In order that men may realize the strength of this passion, it will suffice to add that this son was not only Madame de Dey's only child, but her last remaining relative, the only being to whom she could attach the fears, the hopes, and the joys of her life. The late Comte de Dey was the last scion of his family, as she was the last inheritress of her name. Thus human calculations and interests united with the noblest yearnings of the heart to exalt in the countess a sentiment that is strong beyond words in most women. She had reared her son with the most infinite care, which had made him even more dear to her; twenty times the doctors predicted that she would lose him; but, trusting in her presentiments, in her hopes, she had the inexpressible joy of seeing him pass safely through all the perils of infancy, and of glorying in the upbuilding of his constitution despite the decrees of the Faculty.

Thanks to unremitting care, this son had grown apace, and was so well-developed and graceful, that at twenty years he was considered one of the most accomplished gallants at Versailles. Lastly,—a joy which does not crown the efforts of all mothers,—her son adored her; their hearts were bound together by a sort of brotherly sympathy. Had they not been united by the will of Nature, they would instinctively have felt for each other that friendship of man for man which is so rarely met with in life. Appointed sub-lieutenant of dragoons at eighteen, the young count had obeyed what was supposed to be the call of honor at that time, and had followed the princes in their emigration.

Thus Madame de Dey, nobly born, rich, and the mother of an *émigré*, did not conceal from herself the perils of her painful situation. Impelled by no other desire than that of preserving a great fortune intact for her son, she had renounced the happiness of accompanying him; but when she read the rigorous laws by virtue of which the Republic confiscated day after day the property of *émigrés* at Carentan, she congratulated herself on that act of courage. Was she not caring for her son's treasure at the risk of her life? Then, when she learned of the terrible executions decreed by the Convention, she slept tranquilly, knowing that her only treasure was in a place of safety, far from all perils, far from all scaffolds. She rejoiced in the thought that she had chosen the wiser course, preserving all her wealth at the same time. Making to that secret thought the concessions

demanding by the misery of the time, without compromising her womanly dignity or her aristocratic beliefs, she enveloped her sorrows in unapproachable mystery. She realized the difficulties that awaited her at Carentan. To come there and assume the first place in society was to defy the scaffold every day! But, upheld by the courage of a mother, she was able to win the affections of the poor by relieving all cases of destitution without distinction; and she made herself necessary to the rich by presiding over their amusements. She received the prosecuting attorney of the commune, the mayor, the president of the court, the public accuser, and even the judges of the revolutionary tribunal. The first four of these functionaries, being unmarried, paid court to her with the hope of marrying her, either by dint of terrifying her by the evil they could do, or by offering her their protection. The public accuser, formerly prosecuting attorney at Caen, who had once had charge of the countess's affairs, tried to win her affection by conduct marked by self-sacrificing generosity; perilous cunning! He was the most formidable of all the aspirants. He alone was thoroughly acquainted with the condition of his former client's considerable fortune. His passion was naturally heightened by all the cravings of an avaricious nature supported by a tremendous power, by the right of life and death in the district. He was still a young man, and his actions were marked by such apparent generosity that Madame de Dey had not as yet been able to



make up her mind concerning him. But, scorning the danger of contending in cunning with Normans, she employed the inventive wits and the genius for strategy which nature has allotted to women in opposing these rival claims to one another. By thus gaining time, she hoped to arrive safe and sound at the end of the troublous times. At that period, the royalists in the interior flattered themselves every day that the next day would see the end of the Revolution; and that conviction was the ruin of many of them.

Notwithstanding these difficulties, the countess had adroitly managed to retain her independence down to the day when, with inexplicable imprudence, she had thought best to close her door. She was the object of such deep and genuine interest that the persons who came to her house that evening were seriously disturbed on learning that it was impossible for her to receive them; and with the outspoken curiosity which is a marked characteristic of provincial manners, they inquired the nature of the trouble, the vexation, or the indisposition which had incapacitated Madame de Dey. To these inquiries an old housekeeper named Brigitte replied that her mistress had locked herself into her own room and would see no one, not even her own servants. The quasi-cloistral existence led by the people of a small town gives rise to a habit of analyzing and interpreting one another's acts,—a habit naturally so invincible, that, after expressing sympathy for Madame de Dey, without knowing whether she was

really ill or unhappy, everyone began to look for the reasons of her sudden retirement.

"If she were ill," said one, "she would have sent for the doctor; but the doctor was at my house playing chess all day. He said to me laughingly that there's only one disease these days, and that that is unfortunately incurable."

That jest was hazarded modestly. Thereupon women, men, old men, and maidens began to scour the vast field of conjectures. Everyone fancied that he could detect a secret, and that secret engrossed the imaginations of all. The next day, the suspicions became more tinctured with gall. As life is an open book in a small town, the women learned at once that Brigitte had laid in a larger supply of provisions than usual at the market. That fact could not be denied. Brigitte had been seen on the square early in the morning, and—a most extraordinary thing!—she had bought the only hare that was offered for sale. The whole town knew that Madame de Dey was not fond of game. The hare became a point of departure for an infinity of suppositions. The old men, as they took their daily walk, noticed about the countess's house a sort of concentrated bustle, revealed by the very precautions which the servants took to keep out of sight. The *valet de chambre* was beating a carpet in the garden; no one would have noticed it the day before, but now that carpet became a piece of testimony confirming the romances which everybody was engaged in constructing. Each person had his or her own theory.

On the second day, learning that Madame de Dey pretended to be indisposed, the leading personages of Carentan assembled in the evening at the house of the mayor's brother, an old tradesman, a married man, upright, generally esteemed, of whom the countess thought very highly. There all the aspirants for the rich widow's hand had a more or less probable story to tell; and each of them was scheming to turn to his own advantage the secret circumstance which compelled her to compromise herself thus. The public accuser imagined a whole drama, the plot of which was a secret visit of Madame de Dey's son, under cover of the night. The mayor inclined to the theory that some priest who had not taken the oath had come from La Vendée and sought shelter under her roof; but the purchase of a hare, on Friday, embarrassed him sadly. The president of the court maintained stoutly that it was a leader of Chouans or of Vendéans, hotly pursued. Others suggested a nobleman escaped from prison at Paris. In a word, one and all suspected the countess of being guilty of one of those generous acts which the laws of the period called crimes, and which might lead to the scaffold. The public accuser added, by the way, that they must hold their peace, and try to save the unfortunate creature from the abyss toward which she was advancing by long strides.

"If you make a noise about this affair," said he, "I shall be obliged to intervene, to search the house, and then!—"

He did not finish, but everybody understood his reticence.

The countess's sincere friends were so alarmed for her that, during the morning of the third day, the procureur-syndic of the Commune caused his wife to write her a line and urge her to receive that evening as usual. The old tradesman took a bolder step, and called at Madame de Dey's that morning. Strong in the consciousness of the service he intended to render her, he demanded to be shown to her presence, and was struck dumb when he saw her in the garden, cutting the last flowers in the flower-beds to fill her vases.

"Doubtless she has been harboring her lover," said the old man to himself, seized with compassion for the charming woman.

The strange expression of the countess's face confirmed him in his suspicions. Deeply touched by that self-sacrificing spirit, which is so natural to women, but which always moves us to admiration, because all men are flattered by the sacrifices which a woman makes for a man, the tradesman informed the countess of the reports which were current in the town, and of her perilous position.

"For," he said, in conclusion, "although there are some of our public functionaries who are disposed to forgive you for a display of heroism of which a priest was the object, no one will pity you if it is discovered that you are sacrificing yourself to the inclinations of your heart."

At those words, Madame de Dey gazed at the old

man with a wild, distracted expression which made him quiver, old man that he was.

"Come," she said, taking his hand and leading him to her bedroom, where, after making sure that they were alone, she took from her bosom a soiled and ragged letter.—"Read!" she cried, making a superhuman effort in order to pronounce the word.

She sank into a chair, as if utterly prostrated. While the old tradesman was looking for his spectacles and rubbing them, she fixed her eyes upon him and examined him for the first time with interest; then she said, softly, in a trembling voice:

"I trust myself to you."

"Why, did I not come here to share your crime?" rejoined the good man, simply.

She started. For the first time since she had lived in that small town, her heart was in sympathy with another's heart. The old tradesman understood at once the countess's depression and her joy. Her son had taken part in the Granville expedition, and he wrote to his mother from his prison, giving her a sweet, sad hope. Trusting fully in his means of escape, he appointed three days during which he might be expected to appear at her house, in disguise. The fatal letter ended with a heart-rending farewell in case he should not be at Carentan by the evening of the third day, and he begged his mother to hand a considerable sum of money to the messenger who had undertaken to carry her that letter through innumerable dangers. The paper trembled in the old man's hands.

"And this is the third day," cried Madame de Dey; and she sprang to her feet, took the letter, and began to pace the floor.

"You have been very imprudent," remarked the tradesman. "Why did you lay in a stock of provisions?"

"Why, he may be half-starved, overdone with fatigue, and—"

She did not finish.

"I am sure of my brother," said the old man; "I am going to enlist him on your side."

The tradesman recovered in this emergency the shrewdness which he had formerly displayed in his business, and which dictated to him a course of action instinct with prudence and sagacity. After agreeing upon all that they were respectively to say and do, the old man invented plausible pretexts for going to one after another of the leading inhabitants of Carentan, and announced that Madame de Dey, whom he had just seen, would receive that evening despite her indisposition. Contesting the palm for adroitness with the Norman intellect in the cross-examination to which each family subjected him as to the nature of the countess's illness, he succeeded in throwing almost everybody who was interested in the mysterious affair off the scent. His first visit had a marvellous effect. He said, in the presence of a gouty old lady, that Madame de Dey had nearly died of an attack of gout in the stomach; the celebrated Trochin having once advised her, under those circumstances, to place on her stomach the skin of a



hare roasted alive, and to remain in bed without the slightest exertion, the countess, who was in danger of death two days before, was sufficiently recovered, after following Trochin's peculiar prescription to the letter, to receive those who might call upon her that evening. This fable was prodigiously successful, and the Carentan physician, a royalist *in petto*, added to its effect by the serious manner in which he discussed the treatment. Nevertheless, suspicion had taken too deep a root in the minds of some obstinate creatures, or, if you please, philosophers, to be entirely dissipated; so that Madame de Dey's friends appeared early that evening, and with evident eagerness, some to watch her countenance, others from friendship, the majority being deeply impressed by her speedy cure.

They found the countess seated at the corner of the great fireplace in her salon, which was almost as modestly furnished as the ordinary Carentan salon; for, in order not to wound the narrow self-esteem of her guests, she had denied herself the luxurious appointments to which she had been accustomed, and had made no changes in the old house. The floor of the reception-room was not even rubbed. She left the dismal old hangings on the walls, retained the provincial furniture, burned tallow-candles, and adopted the fashions of the time, espousing the life of the provinces without recoiling at the most disagreeable pettinesses or the most unpleasant privations. But, knowing that her guests would forgive such magnificence as had their comfort for its object,



she neglected nothing in the way of providing for their individual enjoyment; so that she gave excellent dinners. She went so far as to feign avarice to gratify those close-reckoning minds; and after she had shrewdly caused several concessions to luxury to be extorted from her, she had the tact to obey gracefully.

About seven o'clock, therefore, the cream of the rather inferior society of Carentan was present in her salon, seated in a large semicircle in front of the fireplace. The mistress of the house, sustained in her misery by the compassionate glances of the old tradesman, submitted with unheard-of courage to the minute questions, the trivial, stupid arguments of her guests. But at every blow of the knocker on her door, or whenever footsteps were heard in the street, she concealed her emotion by starting discussions upon questions of interest to the welfare of the province. She precipitated a noisy dispute concerning the quality of the cider, and was so well seconded by her confidant, that the assemblage almost forgot to watch her, her expression was so unconcerned and her presence of mind so imperturbable. The public accuser and one of the judges of the tribunal said little, kept a close watch for the slightest change in her features, listened to the sounds in the house notwithstanding the uproar; and on several occasions they propounded embarrassing questions, to which the countess replied, however, with admirable presence of mind. Mothers have such a store of courage!

When Madame de Dey had arranged all the games, assigned everybody a place at the tables of boston, reversi, or whist, she remained for a few moments talking with the utmost nonchalance with several young ladies, playing her part like a consummate actress. Somebody asked for a game of loto, she pretended that she alone knew where it was, and disappeared.

"I am stifling, my poor Brigitte!" she cried, wiping away the tears which poured from her eyes, gleaming with fever, grief, and impatience.—"He does not come," she added, looking around the chamber in which she had taken refuge. "Here, I breathe and I live. A few moments more, and perhaps he will be here! for he still lives, I am sure of it. My heart tells me so. Do you hear nothing, Brigitte? Oh! I would give the rest of my life to know whether he is in prison or is walking across the country! I wish I need not think."

She looked once more to see if everything was in order in the room. A bright fire was blazing on the hearth; the shutters were carefully fastened; the furniture shone with cleanliness; the way in which the bed was made proved that the countess had assisted Brigitte in attending to the most trifling details; and her hopes were betrayed in the painstaking care which seemed to have been lavished in that room, where the sweet charm of love and its most chaste caresses were breathed forth in the fragrance exhaled by the flowers. A mother alone could have foreseen the wishes of a soldier, and arranged to satisfy them

all so completely. An exquisite repast, choice wines, linen, shoes, and stockings, everything, in short, that could possibly be necessary or pleasant to a weary traveller, was in readiness there, so that he might lack nothing, so that the delights of home might reveal the depth of a mother's love.

"Brigitte!" said the countess, in a heart-rending tone, placing a chair at the table as if to give reality to her longings, as if to augment the force of her illusions.

"Oh! he will come, madame. He isn't far away. I don't doubt that he is alive and on the way," replied Brigitte. "I put a key in the Bible and held it on my fingers while Cottin read the Gospel of Saint John—and, madame, the key didn't turn!"

"Are you quite sure?" asked the countess.

"Oh! madame, there's no doubt. I would wager my salvation that he is still alive. God can't be mistaken."

"Notwithstanding the danger that awaits him here, I would like to see him."

"Poor Monsieur Auguste!" cried Brigitte, "he is coming on foot, no doubt."

"And there is eight o'clock striking!" cried the countess, in dismay.

She was afraid that she had remained longer than she ought in that room, where she found it easier to believe that her son was alive as she looked upon everything that meant life; she went down again, but, before entering the salon, she stood for a moment in the porch, listening for any sound that might

awake the silent echoes of the town. She smiled at Brigitte's husband, who was doing sentry duty, and whose eyes seemed dazed by dint of listening intently to the sounds of the street and the darkness. She saw her son in everything and everywhere. Soon she re-entered the salon, assuming a cheerful air, and began to play at loto with some young girls; but from time to time she complained of suffering, and returned to her armchair by the fireplace.

Such was the condition of affairs and persons in Madame de Dey's house; while, on the road from Paris to Cherbourg, a young man dressed in a brown *carmagnole*, the costume *de rigueur* of that day, was walking in the direction of Carentan. When the system of conscriptions was inaugurated, there was little or no discipline. The exigencies of the moment made it impossible for the Republic to equip its soldiers immediately, and it was no rare thing to see the roads covered with conscripts who were still wearing their civilian clothes. These young men marched in advance of their battalions to the places where halts were to be made, or remained behind, for their progress was governed by their ability to endure the fatigue of a long march. The traveller in question was considerably in advance of the battalion of conscripts on their way to Cherbourg, whom the mayor of Carentan was expecting from hour to hour, in order to distribute billets for quarters. The young man's step was somewhat heavy, but still firm, and his swinging gait seemed to indicate that he had been for some time familiar with

the hardships of a soldier's life. Although the moon shone brightly on the fields about Carentan, he had noticed divers white clouds ready to spread a cloak of snow over the country-side, and the dread of being overtaken by a storm doubtless quickened his pace, which was even then more rapid than his wearied limbs found agreeable. He had an almost empty knapsack on his back, and carried in his hand a boxwood staff, cut from one of the high, dense hedges of that shrub which surround most of the estates of Lower Normandie. This solitary traveller entered Carentan, whose towers, bordered with fantastic beams by the moon, had been visible for a few moments. His footsteps awoke the echoes in the silent streets, where he met no one; he was obliged to ask the way to the mayor's house of a weaver whom he found still at work. The magistrate lived a short distance away, and the conscript soon found himself beneath the shelter of his porch, and seated himself on a stone bench to await the billet he had demanded. But, being summoned to the official's presence, he appeared before him and was subjected to a minute scrutiny. The soldier was a young man of attractive appearance, who evidently belonged to some family of distinction. His manner betrayed his noble birth. The intelligence due to a good education could be read upon his face.

"What's your name?" asked the mayor, bestowing a shrewd glance upon him.

"Julien Jussieu," replied the conscript.

"And you come—?" said the magistrate, with an incredulous smile.

"From Paris."

"Your comrades must be at some distance?" rejoined the Norman, in a jocose tone.

"I am three leagues in advance of the battalion."

"Doubtless there is some sentiment which attracts you to Carentan, citizen conscript?" said the mayor, with a cunning look. "It's all right," he added, imposing silence with a wave of the hand on the young man, who was about to speak: "we know where to send you. Here," he said, handing him his billet, "take this, *Citizen Jussieu*."

There was a suggestion of irony in the tone in which the magistrate pronounced these last two words, as he handed him a slip of paper on which Madame de Dey's address was written. The young man read the address with an air of interest.

"Well he knows that he hasn't far to go, and when he's once outside, he'll soon be across the square!" said the mayor to himself, as the young man took his leave. "He's a bold fellow! May God protect him! He has an answer ready for everything. True, but if anybody but myself had asked to see his papers, he would have been lost!"

At that moment, the clocks of Carentan struck half after nine; torches were being lighted in Madame de Dey's antechamber; the servants were assisting their masters and mistresses to put on their clogs, their coats, or their cloaks; the card-players had settled their accounts, and were about to withdraw

in a body, according to the established custom in all small towns.

"It seems that the public accuser proposes to remain," said a lady, noticing that that important functionary was absent when they all separated on the square to seek their respective homes, after exhausting all known forms of leave-taking.

That awe-inspiring magistrate was, in fact, alone with the countess, who waited in fear and trembling until it should be his pleasure to take his leave.

"Citizeness," he said, after a long silence in which there was something terrifying, "I am sent here to see that the laws of the Republic are enforced."

Madame de Dey shuddered.

"Have you nothing to tell me?" he asked.

"Nothing," she replied, greatly astonished.

"Ah! madame," cried the accuser, seating himself by her side and changing his tone, "for lack of the right word, you or I might bring our heads to the scaffold. I have observed your disposition, your state of mind, your manners, too closely, to share the error into which you have led your friends this evening. I cannot doubt that you expect your son."

The countess managed to make a gesture of denial; but she had turned pale, and the muscles of her face were contracted by the imperative necessity that compelled her to maintain a deceptive tranquillity; the public accuser's pitiless eye lost none of her movements.

"Very good; admit him," he said; "but let him not remain later than seven o'clock in the morning



beneath your roof. To-morrow, at dawn of day, I shall come here, armed with a denunciation which I shall lodge myself."

She looked at him with a dazed expression that would have moved a tiger to compassion.

"I will demonstrate the falsity of the denunciation," he continued, in a soft voice, "by a thorough search, and my report will be of such a nature that you will be out of reach of all suspicion hereafter. I will speak of your patriotic benefactions, of your good citizenship, and we shall *all* be saved."

Madame de Dey feared a trap; she neither spoke nor moved, but her face was on fire, and her tongue frozen. A blow of the knocker echoed through the house.

"Ah!" cried the mother, in deadly terror, falling on her knees. "Save him! save him!"

"Yes, let us save him," replied the public accuser, darting a passionate glance at her, "though it cost *us* our lives."

"I am lost!" she cried, as he courteously raised her to her feet.

"Oh! madame," he rejoined, with a grand oratorical gesture, "I prefer to owe you to yourself, and to yourself alone."

"Madame, here he—" cried Brigitte, thinking that her mistress was alone.

At sight of the public accuser, the old servant's flushed, joyous face became rigid and pale as death.

"What is it, Brigitte?" inquired the magistrate, with a mild and knowing air.

"A conscript sent here by the mayor to be furnished with lodgings," replied the servant, showing the billet.

"True," said the accuser, after reading the paper, "a battalion is to arrive this evening."

And he left the room.

The countess, at that moment, felt too strongly the need to believe in the sincerity of her former solicitor to conceive the slightest doubt; she ran swiftly up the stairs, hardly able to stand; then she opened the door of the bedroom, saw her son, and threw herself into his arms, almost lifeless.

"Oh! my child, my child!" she cried, sobbing, and frantically covering him with kisses.

"Madame—" said the stranger.

"Ah! it is not he!" she cried, recoiling in terror, and standing in front of the conscript, at whom she gazed with haggard features.

"O Blessed God, what a resemblance!" exclaimed Brigitte.

There was a moment's silence, and the stranger himself felt a thrill of compassion at the appearance of Madame de Dey.

"Ah! monsieur," she said, leaning on Brigitte's husband, and feeling in its full extent a sorrow of which the first pang had narrowly missed killing her; "monsieur, I could not endure to be with you long; permit my people to take my place and to attend to your needs."

She went down-stairs, half supported by Brigitte and her old retainer.

"What, madame!" cried the housekeeper, leading her mistress to a seat, "that man sleep in Monsieur Auguste's bed, wear Monsieur Auguste's slippers, eat the pie I made for Monsieur Auguste! If I was to be guillotined for it, I—"

"Brigitte!" cried Madame de Dey.

Brigitte held her peace.

"Hold your tongue, chatterer," said her husband in an undertone; "do you want to kill madame?"

At that moment, the conscript made a noise in his room, as he took his place at the table.

"I cannot stay here," cried Madame de Dey; "I will go into the conservatory where I can hear better what happens out-of-doors during the night."

She hovered between the fear that she had lost her son and the hope of seeing him appear. The night was horribly silent. The countess had one frightful moment when the battalion of conscripts arrived and each man went in search of the house in which he was quartered. At every footstep, every sound, her hopes were raised only to be disappointed; but soon nature resumed a ghastly tranquillity. Toward morning, the countess was obliged to return to her own room. Brigitte, who had watched all her mistress's movements, seeing that she did not leave her room again, went in and found her dead.

"She must have heard that conscript dressing himself and walking round Monsieur Auguste's room, singing their damned *Marseillaise*, as if he was in a stable!" cried Brigitte. "That must have killed her!"

The countess's death was caused by a far deeper sentiment, and doubtless by some terrible vision. At the very hour when Madame de Dey died at Carentan, her son was shot in the Morbihan. We may add this tragic incident to the great mass of observations concerning the sympathies which disregarded the laws of space; documents which certain lovers of solitude are collecting with scholarly curiosity, and which will serve some day as the basis of a new science which has thus far lacked the initiative of a man of genius.

Paris, February 1831.

## THE EXECUTIONER



*TO MARTINEZ DE LA ROSA*





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The clock in the little town of Menda had struck midnight. At that moment, a young French officer, leaning on the parapet of a long terrace which bordered the gardens of the castle of Menda, seemed absorbed in meditation more profound than was consistent with the proverbial heedlessness of the soldier's life; but it must be said that never were hour, place, and weather more conducive to meditation. The beautiful Spanish sky formed an azure dome above his head. The twinkling stars and the soft light of the moon shone upon a lovely valley which wound coquettishly at his feet. Leaning against an orange-tree in flower, the officer could see, a hundred feet below him, the town of Menda, which seemed to have nestled, out of reach of the north winds, at the foot of the cliff on which the castle was built. By turning his head, he could see the ocean, whose glistening waves framed the landscape in a broad band of silver. The castle was brightly lighted. The joyous uproar of a ball, the notes of the orchestra, the laughter of a number of officers and their partners reached his ears, blended with the distant murmur of the waves. The cool evening air imparted renewed vigor to his body, exhausted by the heat of the day. The gardens were filled with trees so odoriferous, and flowers so sweet,

that the young man was, as it were, swimming in a bath of perfumes.

The castle of Menda belonged to a Spanish grandee, who was living there at this time with his family. Throughout the evening, his eldest daughter had gazed at the young officer with so earnest an expression of melancholy interest, that it might well have afforded him food for thought. Clara was beautiful, and although she had three brothers and a sister, the fortune of the Marquis of Légañès seemed to be so large that Victor Marchand was led to believe that she would have a handsome dowry. But how could he dare hope that the daughter of the old man who set more store by his grandeeship than any other nobleman in Spain, would be given to the son of a Paris grocer! Moreover, the French were detested. The marquis having been suspected by General G . . t . . r, who was military governor of the province, of plotting an uprising in favor of Ferdinand VII., the battalion commanded by Victor Marchand had been quartered in the little town of Menda to hold in check the neighboring country districts, which were under the influence of the Marquis of Légañès. A recent despatch from Maréchal Ney caused apprehension that the English would soon make a landing on the coast, and mentioned the marquis as a man who was in correspondence with the cabinet at London. So it was, that, notwithstanding the cordial welcome the Spaniard had extended to Victor Marchand and his men, the young officer was constantly on his guard. As he walked

toward the terrace, where he went to examine the condition of the town and outlying district which had been placed in his charge, he asked himself how he ought to interpret the friendliness which the marquis had constantly displayed toward him, and how the apparent tranquillity of the province was to be reconciled with his general's uneasiness; but within the last few moments these thoughts had been banished from the young major's mind by something which warned him to be prudent, and at the same time aroused a very natural curiosity. He had noticed a large number of lights in the town. Although it was the feast of Saint James, he had issued orders that very morning that all lights should be extinguished at the hour fixed by his regulations. Only the castle had been excepted from this order. He saw the bayonets of his soldiers glistening here and there at their usual stations; but the silence was profound, and there was nothing to indicate that the Spaniards had indulged too freely in strong drink during the festival. After he had cudgelled his brain for an explanation of this infraction of rules by the townspeople, the mystery remained more incomprehensible to him than ever, especially as he had left officers there in charge of the night patrols. With the impetuosity of youth, he was on the point of darting through a breach in the terrace in order to go rapidly down the cliff, and in that way reach more quickly than by the regular road a picket stationed at the entrance to the village on the castle side, when a slight noise arrested him. He fancied that

he heard the gravel in one of the paths creak beneath a woman's light foot. He turned his head and saw nothing, but his eyes were attracted by the extraordinary brilliancy of the ocean. He suddenly witnessed a spectacle so ominous that he stood motionless with surprise, accusing his eyes of deceiving him. The white rays of the moon enabled him to distinguish a number of sails at a considerable distance in the offing. He started, and tried to convince himself that the vision was an optical illusion, caused by the vagaries of the waves and the moon.

At that moment, a hoarse voice called his name; he turned toward the breach, and saw slowly rise above it the head of the soldier who had attended him to the castle.

"Is it you, commandant?"

"Yes. What is it?" said the young man in an undertone, warned by a sort of presentiment to act cautiously.

"Those rascals yonder are moving about like worms, and I have come at once, if you will allow me, to tell you what little things I've noticed."

"Speak," said Victor Marchand.

"I just followed a man from the castle, who came this way with a lantern in his hand. A lantern's a mighty suspicious thing! I don't think that Christian had any need to light tapers at this time of night. 'They mean to swallow us!' I says to myself, and I kept close on his heels. And in that way, commandant, I discovered a big pile of brushwood on a block of stone not three paces from here."

A terrible cry, which suddenly rang out in the town, interrupted the soldier. The commandant's face was lighted up by a sharp flash. The poor grenadier received a bullet in his head and fell. A fire of straw and dry wood blazed up within two yards of the young man. The music and laughter were no longer heard in the ball-room. A deathly silence, interrupted only by groans, had abruptly succeeded to the uproar and music of the fête. A cannon boomed on the white plain of the ocean. A cold sweat broke out on the young officer's forehead. He had no sword. He realized that his soldiers had perished, and that the English were about to land. He knew that he was disgraced if he lived, he fancied himself summoned before a court-martial; he measured with his eyes the depth of the valley, and was rushing away when Clara's hand grasped his.

"Fly!" she said; "my brothers are following me to kill you. At the foot of the cliff yonder, you will find Juanito's horse. Go!"

She pushed him away; the young man gazed at her in dumb amazement for a moment; but, obeying the instinct of self-preservation, which never abandons even the strongest of men, he darted into the park in the direction she had indicated and sped over cliffs where none but goats had found footing hitherto. He heard Clara calling to her brothers to pursue him; he heard the steps of his assassins; he heard several bullets whistle about his ears; but he reached the valley, found the horse, sprang

upon his back, and disappeared with the rapidity of lightning.

A few hours later, the young officer reached the headquarters of General G . . t . . r, whom he found at dinner with his staff.

"I bring you my head!" he cried, appearing before them, pale and haggard.

He sat down and described the horrible adventure. A horrified silence greeted his narrative.

"I consider you rather unfortunate than blameworthy," observed the redoubtable general at last. "You are not responsible for the treachery of the Spaniards, and unless the marshal decides otherwise, I absolve you."

These words afforded but slight comfort to the unhappy officer.

"Suppose the Emperor hears of it?" he cried.

"He will be inclined to have you shot," said the general, "but we will see. But let us say no more of this," he added, sternly, "except to exact vengeance for it in a way that will inspire salutary terror in this country, where they carry on war like savages."

An hour later, a whole regiment, a squadron of cavalry, and an escort of artillery were on the road. The general and Victor marched at the head of the column. The soldiers, who had been told of the massacre of their comrades, were possessed by an unexampled frenzy of rage. The distance between the headquarters and the town of Menda was covered in an incredibly short time. On the way,



the general found whole villages under arms. Every one of the wretched hamlets was surrounded and its inhabitants put to the sword.

By an inexplicable fatality, the English ships had remained in the offing, hove to, without approaching the shore; but it was learned later that those ships carried artillery only, and that they had outsailed the rest of the transports. Thus the town of Menda, unprovided with the defenders that it expected, and whom the appearance of the English vessels seemed to promise, was surrounded by French troops almost without firing a shot. The terror-stricken inhabitants offered to surrender at discretion. Impelled by that spirit of self-sacrificing devotion which has never been rare in the Peninsula, the assassins of the French, judging from the general's notorious cruelty that Menda would probably be burned and the whole population put to the sword, offered to give themselves up to the general. He accepted the offer, adding to it the single condition that the people at the castle, from the lowest scullion to the marquis, should be placed in his hands. These terms of capitulation being agreed upon, the general agreed to pardon the rest of the population and to prevent his troops from pillaging the town or setting fire to it. An enormous indemnity was demanded, and the richest inhabitants became hostages to warrant its payment, which was to be completed in twenty-four hours.

The general took all the precautions necessary for the safety of his troops, provided for the defence

of the district, and refused to quarter his soldiers in the houses. After their camp had been pitched, he went up to the castle and took possession of it in military fashion. The members of the family of Légañès and the servants were carefully kept in sight, bound, and confined in the room where the ball had taken place. From the windows of that room the terrace which overlooked the town could easily be seen. The staff established its quarters in an adjoining gallery, where the general held a council first to decide as to the measures to be taken to prevent the landing of the English. Having despatched an aide de camp to Maréchal Ney and ordered batteries to be put in position along the coast, the general and his staff turned their attention to the prisoners. Two hundred Spaniards whom the townspeople had surrendered were shot forthwith on the terrace. After this military execution, the general ordered as many gibbets to be erected on the terrace as there were prisoners in the ball-room of the castle, and that the executioner of the town be summoned. Victor Marchand took advantage of the time still remaining before dinner to visit the prisoners. He soon returned to the general.

"I come to ask certain favors," he said in a voice trembling with emotion.

"You!" ejaculated the general in a tone of bitter irony.

"Alas!" replied Victor, "they are melancholy favors that I ask. The marquis, seeing the gibbets being put in place, ventures to hope that you will

change the form of punishment so far as his family is concerned, and begs you to behead those of noble birth."

"Very well," said the general.

"They also ask that they may have the consolations of religion, and that their bonds may be removed. They promise to make no attempt to escape."

"I consent," said the general; "but you must answer to me for them."

"The old man offers you his whole fortune if you will pardon his young son."

"Indeed!" retorted the general. "His property already belongs to King Joseph."

He paused. A thought passed through his mind, bringing a wrinkle of contempt to his brow.

"I will grant more than they ask," he added. "I realize the importance of this last request. Very good! let him purchase immortality for his name, but let Spain remember forever his treachery and its punishment! I will give life and his fortune to that one of his sons who will perform the duties of headsman. Go, and say no more about it."

Dinner was served. The officers satisfied an appetite sharpened by fatigue. One only, Victor Marchand, was absent from the feast. After long hesitation, he entered the salon where the haughty family of Légañès lay groaning, and gazed sadly upon the spectacle presented by that apartment, where, only two nights before, he had watched the faces of the two girls and the three young men as

they whirled around in the waltz; he shuddered as he thought that those heads would roll on the ground ere long, severed by the headsman's axe. The father and mother, the three sons and two daughters, were bound to their gilded chairs, utterly unable to move. Eight servants were standing with their hands bound behind their backs. Those fifteen persons looked gravely into one another's faces, but their eyes betrayed little of the sentiments which filled their hearts. Perfect resignation, coupled with regret at having failed in their undertaking, could be read on some faces. Soldiers motionless as statues kept guard over them, respecting the chagrin of those pitiless foes.

All those faces were enlivened by a gleam of curiosity when Victor appeared. He gave orders to unbind the prisoners, and with his own hands loosened the cords by which Clara was bound to her chair. She smiled sadly. The officer could not refrain from touching the maiden's arms, while he gazed admiringly at her black hair, her supple figure. She was a genuine Spaniard: she had the Spanish complexion, Spanish eyes, long, curved lashes, and a pupil blacker than a crow's wing.

"Did you succeed?" she asked him, with one of those funereal smiles in which there is still a touch of girlish animation.

Victor could not restrain a groan. He glanced at the three sons in turn, and from them to Clara. One, the oldest, was thirty years of age. Although small and ill-made, he had a proud and disdainful

*EL VERDUGO*

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*"Strike, Juanito!" she said in a deep voice.*



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bearing, and did not lack a certain nobility of manner, nor did he seem altogether wanting in that delicacy of feeling which formerly made Spanish gallantry so renowned. His name was Juanito. The second, Philip, was about twenty. He resembled Clara. The last was only eight. A painter would have detected in Manuel's features something of that Roman firmness which David gave to the children in his republican pictures. The old marquis's head was covered with white locks which seemed to have escaped from a picture by Murillo. As a result of his scrutiny, the young officer shook his head, having no hope that any one of that family would accept the general's offer. He ventured, nevertheless, to confide it to Clara. The Spanish girl shuddered at first, but she instantly resumed her tranquil manner, and fell on her knees at her father's feet.

"O father, make Juanito swear that he will obey faithfully the orders you give him, and we shall all be satisfied," she said.

The marchioness had a thrill of hope; but when, leaning toward her husband, she heard Clara's ghastly revelation, that mother swooned. Juanito understood it all; he paced the room frantically like a lion in his cage. Victor took it upon himself to dismiss the soldiers, after obtaining the marquis's assurance of absolute submission. The servants were taken away and turned over to the executioner, who hanged them. When Victor alone was left to stand guard over the family, the old father rose.

"Juanito!" he said.

Juanito replied only with a movement of the head which was equivalent to a refusal, fell back upon his chair, and fixed upon his parents a tearless, terrible eye. Clara went and sat upon his knee, and said to him, with feigned cheerfulness, as she threw her arm around his neck and kissed his eyes:

"Dear Juanito, if you knew how sweet death will be to me, dealt by your hand! I shall not have to submit to the hateful touch of a headsman. You will cure me of the miseries which awaited me, and—dear Juanito, you were not willing that I should belong to any other man, so—"

Her velvety eyes flashed a glance of flame at Victor, as if to kindle anew in Juanito's heart his horror of the French.

"Have courage," said his brother Philip; "otherwise our almost royal race becomes extinct."

Suddenly, Clara rose, the group which had formed about Juanito separated; and that justly rebellious son saw standing before him his aged father, who exclaimed in a solemn tone:

"Juanito, I command you!"

The young count stood motionless, his father fell at his feet. Clara, Manuel, and Philip involuntarily imitated him. They all held out their hands to him who was to rescue the family from oblivion, and seemed to echo these words of their father:

"My son, will you be found wanting in Spanish courage and true refinement of feeling? Will you allow me to kneel here for long, and ought you to consider your own life and your sufferings?—Is this

my son, madame?" added the old man, turning to the marchioness.

"He consents!" cried the mother, in despair, seeing Juanito move his eyebrows in a way whose significance was known only to her.

Mariquita, the second daughter, was on her knees with her weak arms thrown about her mother; and as she wept hot tears, her little brother Manuel came and rebuked her. At that moment, the chaplain at the castle entered the room; he was at once surrounded by the whole family, who led Juanito to him. Victor, unable to endure the scene longer, made a sign to Clara and hurried away to make a last attempt to move the general; he found him in a good humor, in the midst of the banquet, drinking with his officers, who were beginning to make merry.

An hour later, a hundred of the most notable inhabitants of Menda appeared on the terrace by the general's order, to witness the execution of the Légañès family. A detachment of soldiers was stationed to see that the Spaniards remained in line under the gibbets on which the marquis's servants had been hanged. The heads of the bourgeois almost touched those martyrs' feet. Thirty paces away stood a block, and beside it a flashing scimitar. The executioner was there in case of refusal on Juanito's part. Soon the Spaniards heard, amid the most profound silence, the footsteps of several persons, the measured tramp of a detachment of soldiers, and the faint clashing of their weapons. These

different sounds were blended with the joyous voices at the officers' banquet, as only a few days earlier the music of a ball had disguised the preparations for the bloody treason. All eyes were turned toward the castle, whence the noble family came forth and walked toward the terrace with incredible self-possession. All their faces were calm and serene. A single man, pale and haggard, was leaning on the arm of the priest, who lavished all the consolations of religion on that man, the only one who was destined to live. The headsman understood, like all the rest, that Juanito had accepted his place for a day. The old marquis and his wife, Clara, Mariquita, and their two brothers, knelt a few steps away from the fatal spot. Juanito was led forward by the priest. When he reached the block, the executioner, taking him by the sleeve, led him aside and presumably gave him some instructions. The confessor placed the victims so that they could not see the block. But they were true Spaniards, and stood erect, with no sign of weakness.

Clara was the first to rush to her brother.

"Juanito," she said, "have pity on my small store of courage! begin with me!"

At that moment, a man's hurried footsteps were heard. Victor arrived on the scene. Clara was already kneeling, her white neck was beckoning to the scimitar. The officer turned pale as death, but found sufficient strength to hurry to her side.

"The general will spare your life if you will marry me," he said to her in a low tone.

The Spaniard flashed a proud, disdainful glance at the officer.

"Strike, Juanito!" she said in a deep voice.

Her head rolled at Victor's feet. The Marchioness of Légañès started convulsively when she heard the sound; that was the only indication of suffering that she gave.

"Am I as good as she was, dear Juanito?" little Manuel asked his brother.

"Ah! you are weeping, Mariquita!" said Juanito.

"True," replied the girl. "I am thinking of you, poor Juanito: you will be unhappy without us!"

Soon the marquis's tall figure appeared. He looked at the blood of his children, turned toward the spectators, who stood mute and motionless as statues, held out his hands toward Juanito, and said in a firm voice:

"Spaniards, I give my son my paternal blessing!—Now, *Marquis*, strike fearlessly, you are without blame."

But when Juanito saw his mother approach, supported by the confessor, he cried: "She held me at her breast!"

His words extorted a shriek of horror from the assemblage. The sounds of the banquet and the joyous laughter of the officers were stilled by that horrible outcry. The marchioness realized that Juanito's courage was exhausted, she rushed to the balustrade, sprang over it, and dashed her brains out on the cliffs below. A cry of admiration arose. Juanito had fallen in a swoon.

“General,” said a half-tipsy officer, “Marchand just told me something about this execution; I will wager that you didn’t order it.”

“Do you forget, messieurs,” observed General G . . . t . . . r, “that, a month hence, five hundred French families will be in mourning, and that we are in Spain? Do you want to leave our bones here?”

After that allocution, no one at the table, not even a sub-lieutenant, dared to empty his glass.

Despite the respect with which he is universally regarded, despite the title of *El Verdugo*—the Executioner—which the King of Spain has bestowed on the Marquis of Légañès as a title of nobility, he is devoured by grief, he lives alone, and rarely appears in society. Crushed beneath the burden of his glorious crime, he seems to be waiting impatiently until the birth of a second son shall entitle him to join the shades which incessantly attend his steps.

Paris, October 1820.



## THE EXILES



*ALMÆ SORORI*



\*

In 1308, there were very few houses on the so-called *Terrain*, formed by the alluvium and sand of the Seine above the old city, behind the church of Notre-Dame. The first man who dared build himself a house on that strip of beach, which was frequently submerged, was a *sergent de ville* of Paris, who had rendered some trifling service to the members of the Chapter of Notre-Dame; in acknowledgment whereof the bishop leased him twenty-three rods of land, free from all claims for rent or taxes on such buildings as he should erect. And so, seven years before the day on which this narrative begins, Joseph Tirechair, one of the roughest guardians of the peace in Paris, as his name indicates, had, by favor of the fines collected by him for offences committed in the streets of the city, built his house on the bank of the Seine, just at the end of what is now Rue du Port-Saint-Landry. In order to protect from injury the merchandise deposited on the wharf, the city had constructed a sort of pier of masonry, which can still be seen on some old plans of Paris, and which preserved the piles of the wharf by sustaining the shock of the water and ice at the head of the *Terrain*. The officer had availed himself of it as a foundation for his house, so that one had to ascend several steps to enter his door. Like all the houses of the time, that cabin was surrounded

by a pointed roof which formed the upper half of a diamond above the façade. To the regret of historiographers, there are no more than one or two examples of such roofs in Paris. A round opening lighted the garret where the policeman's wife dried the linen of the Chapter; for she had the honor of laundering for Notre-Dame, who was certainly no mean customer. On the first floor were two chambers, which were usually let to foreigners for forty Paris sous each per year; an exorbitant price, justified, however, by the magnificence with which Tirechair had furnished them. The walls were hung with Flemish tapestry; a huge bed, embellished with a valance of green serge, like those of the peasants, was handsomely supplied with mattresses and covered with honest sheets of fine linen. Each apartment had its *chauffe-doux*, a sort of stove which it is not worth while to describe. The floor, which was kept scrupulously clean by Madame Tirechair's apprentices, shone like the wood of a shrine. Instead of stools, the tenants had great chairs of carved walnut to sit in, procured, doubtless, at the pillage of some château. Two chests inlaid with brass, a table with twisted legs, completed an outfit worthy of the best equipped knights-bannerets whom business called to Paris. The windows of these two rooms looked on the river. From one you could see only the banks of the Seine and three deserted islands, of which the first two were subsequently united and to-day form Ile Saint-Louis; the third was Ile Louviers. Looking from the other, you could see

through the vista of the Port Saint-Landry the quarter of La Grève, Pont Notre-Dame with its houses, and the high towers of the Louvre, recently built by Philippe-Auguste, which dominated that mean and paltry Paris which suggests so many false marvels to the imagination of modern poets.

The bottom of Tirechair's house, to use an expression then in vogue, consisted of a large room in which his wife worked and through which his tenants were obliged to pass to reach their rooms, climbing a staircase like that of a mill. Behind the large room were the kitchen and the bedroom, which looked on the Seine. A little garden, on filled land, displayed at the rear of that humble dwelling its beds of green cabbage, its onions, and a few rose-bushes protected by stakes which formed a sort of hedge. A little hut built of wood and mud served as a kennel for a great dog, a necessary guardian of that isolated dwelling. At that kennel began an enclosure filled with cackling hens whose eggs were sold to the canons. Here and there over the Terrain, which was muddy or dry according to the caprices of the Parisian atmosphere, there were a few small trees, constantly maltreated by the wind, and twisted and broken by passers-by; hardy willows, rushes, and tail grasses. The beach, the Seine, the wharf, the house, had for a background to the west the immense cathedral of Notre-Dame, which cast its cold shadow over the neighborhood at the sun's bidding. Then, as to-day, there was no more solitary spot in Paris, no more solemn or more depressing landscape. The

loud murmur of the water, the chanting of the priests and the whistling of the wind, were the only sounds that disturbed that species of sylvan retreat, whither an amorous couple now and then betook themselves to confide their secrets to each other when the church services detained the members of the Chapter.

On a certain evening in the month of April, 1308, Tirechair returned home singularly out of sorts. For three days past he had found everything in order on the public streets. As a guardian of the public peace, nothing annoyed him more than to find that he was useless. He threw his halberd angrily aside, and grumbled some vague words as he removed his particolored red and blue uniform, to put on a wretched camlet jacket. Having taken a slice of bread from the bread-pan and spread a layer of butter upon it, he ensconced himself on a bench, examined his four whitewashed walls, counted the rafters in his ceiling, made a mental inventory of the household utensils hanging on nails, cursed the painstaking neatness which left him nothing to say, and glanced at his wife, who said never a word as she ironed the albs and surplices from the sacristy.

"By my salvation," he said, to begin the conversation, "I know not, Jacqueline, where you go to fish for your apprentices. Now, there's one," he added, pointing to a girl who was folding an altar-cloth awkwardly enough; "on my word, the more I look at her, the more I think that she resembles a girl who's mad over her own body, than an honest,



strapping country serving-wench. Her hands are as white as any lady's! *Jour-de-Dieu*, her hands smell of perfumery, I really believe! and her shoes are as dainty as a queen's. By Mahom's double horn, affairs in this house are not going to my taste!"

The girl began to blush, and glanced at Jacqueline with an expression in which fear and pride were blended. The laundress answered the glance with a smile, quitted her work, and said to her husband, tartly:

"Come, come! don't be impatient! You're not going to accuse me of scheming, are you? Trot about your streets all you choose and don't meddle with what goes on here except to sleep in peace, drink your wine and eat what I put on the table; if you do, I'll not undertake to keep you in happiness and health any longer. Find me in this whole city a luckier man than this monkey!" she added, with a reproachful grimace. "There's money in his purse, he has a gable end on the Seine, an honest halberd on one side, a virtuous wife on the other, a house as clean and neat as my eye; and he whines like a pilgrim with Saint Anthony's fire!"

"Look ye, Jacqueline," rejoined the policeman, "do you think that I want to see my house pulled down, my halberd in another's hands, and my wife in the pillory?"

Jacqueline and the ladylike apprentice turned pale.

"Tell me what you mean," retorted the former, hastily, "and let me see what you have on your mind. I've seen plainly enough, my boy, that for

some days past you've been quartering some foolish idea in your poor brain. Come, let it out, tell me all you think. You must be a terrible coward to be afraid of a bit of a quarrel when you carry the halberd of the municipality, and live under the protection of the Chapter. The canons would put the whole diocese under the ban if Jacqueline complained to them of the slightest affront."

As she spoke, she walked up to her husband and took him by the arm.

"Come with me," she added, pulling him to his feet and leading him out on the steps.

When they were in the little garden on the water's edge, Jacqueline cast a mocking glance at her husband.

"Let me tell you, old vagabond, that whenever that lovely lady goes out of the house a gold piece goes into our money-box."

"Oho!" said the officer, and he stood for a moment pensive and silent before his wife.

But he soon continued:

"No matter! we are lost. Why does that woman come to our house?"

"She comes to see the pretty little clerk we have up yonder," replied Jacqueline, pointing to the room whose window overlooked the long stretch of the Seine.

"Malediction!" cried the officer. "For a few paltry crowns you have ruined me, Jacqueline. What sort of a trade is that for the virtuous, prudish wife of a policeman? Why, if she was a countess

## DANTE ALIGHIERI

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*The stranger stood for a moment in the doorway scrutinizing the three persons in the room, apparently to see if his companion were there. The glance that he cast upon them, careless as it was, troubled their hearts.*







or a baroness, this lady would not be able to help us out of the trap into which we shall be lured sooner or later! We shall have against us a powerful and deeply wounded husband; for, *jarnidieu!* she's very beautiful."

"Nonsense, she's a widow, you old goose! How dare you suspect your wife of such villainy and stupidity, too? The lady has never spoken to our pretty clerk, she contents herself with looking at him and thinking about him. Poor child! but for her he'd have died of hunger before this, for she's like a mother to him. And as for him, the cherub, it's as easy to deceive him as to rock a new-born babe to sleep. He thinks that his pittance still holds out, and he has already spent it twice over in six months."

"Wife," rejoined the officer, gravely, pointing toward Place de Grève, "do you remember seeing from here the fire at which that Danish woman was roasted the other day?"

"What of that?" said Jacqueline in alarm.

"Why, the two strangers we are lodging have a smell of something burning," replied Tirechair. "Neither Chapter, nor countess, nor all the protection in the world will count for anything. Now, Easter has come, the year's at end, and we must show our guests the door, at once and without ceremony. Can you teach a policeman to scent gallows-birds? Our two guests were friends of La Porrette, that heretic from Denmark or Norway whose last shriek you heard from here. She was a courageous

witch, she never flinched at the stake, which abundantly proved her foregathering with the devil: I saw her as plainly as I see you; she kept on preaching to those who stood by, saying that she was in heaven, and could see God. Well, since then I haven't slept quietly in my bed. The nobleman who sleeps over our heads is certainly more sorcerer than Christian. On my word as a guardian of the peace! I can't help shuddering when that old fellow passes me; he never sleeps at night; if I wake, his voice rings out like a bell in the distance, and I hear him conjuring spirits in the language of hell. Did you ever see him eat an honest crust of bread, a cake made by the hand of a Catholic baker? His dark skin was cooked and tanned by the fire of hell. *Jour-de-Dieu!* his eyes fascinate one like a snake's! Jacqueline, I will not have those two men in my house. I see the law too close in my trade not to know that one must never have any quarrel to settle with it. You must turn out our two tenants: the old one because I consider him a suspicious character, the young one because he is too much of a dandy. Both of them act as if they didn't frequent Christian society, certainly they don't live as we live; the little fellow is always watching the moon and stars and clouds, like a witch waiting until it's time to saddle her broomstick; the other old fox is certainly making use of that poor child for some deviltry or other. My hovel is on the river now, and I run enough risk without attracting the fire from heaven or the love of a countess. I have spoken. Don't be found tripping."



Although she wielded despotic authority in the house, Jacqueline was dumfounded when she heard the bill of complaint, so to speak, lodged by the policeman against her two guests. At that moment, she glanced mechanically at the window of the old man's room, and shuddered with horror as she suddenly espied the melancholy, gloomy face, the profound gaze which sent a thrill through her husband, accustomed as he was to the sight of criminals.

In those days, everybody alike, clergy and laity, trembled at the thought of a supernatural power. The word magic was as powerful as leprosy to crush the sentiments, shatter social bonds, and freeze compassion in the most generous hearts. It suddenly occurred to Tirechair's wife that she had never seen her two guests doing anything that ordinary mortals do. Although the younger man's voice was as sweet and melodious as the notes of a flute, she heard it so rarely that she was tempted to consider it a product of magic. As she recalled the unusual beauty of that pink and white face, as she saw in her memory those blond locks, and the melting fire of that glance, she fancied that she could detect the artifices of the evil one therein. She remembered that she had passed whole days without hearing the slightest sound in the apartments of the two strangers. Where were they during those long hours? Suddenly, a multitude of the strangest circumstances thronged into her mind. She was utterly overcome by fear, and chose to see a manifestation of the magic art in the love which this wealthy lady entertained for young

Godefroid, a poor orphan who had come to Paris from Flanders to study at the University. She at once put her hand in one of her pockets, hastily pulled out four *livres tournois*, and gazed at the big, silver coins with avarice mingled with dread.

"But this isn't spurious money, is it?" she said, showing the pieces to her husband.—"And then," she added, "how are we to turn them out after they have paid next year's rent in advance?"

"You must consult the dean of the Chapter," replied her husband. "It's his place, isn't it, to tell us how we must act with abnormal creatures?"

"Ah! yes, abnormal indeed!" cried Jacqueline. "There's cunning for you! to come and lodge in the very lap of Notre-Dame! But," she continued, "before consulting the dean, why not warn this noble and respectable lady of the danger she is running?"

As Jacqueline concluded, she and her husband, who had not once ceased eating, returned to the house. Tirechair, like a man grown old in the wiles of his trade, pretended to take the stranger for a real apprentice; but this apparent indifference betrayed the apprehension of a courtier who respects a royal *incognito*. At that moment, six o'clock struck on the clock of Saint-Denis-du-Pas, a small church between Notre-Dame and Port Saint-Landry, the first cathedral built in Paris on the very spot where Saint-Denis was broiled, so the chronicles say. Instantly the hour flew from steeple to steeple throughout the whole city. Suddenly, confused shouts arose

on the left bank of the Seine, behind Notre-Dame, in the region where the buildings of the University were huddled together. At that signal, Jacqueline's older guest began to move about in his room. The policeman, his wife, and the unknown apprentice heard a door suddenly opened and closed, and the stranger's heavy step rang out on the stairs of the inside staircase. Tirechair's suspicions imparted such absorbing interest to that person's appearance, that his face and Jacqueline's suddenly assumed an odd expression which attracted the lady's attention. After the manner of all those who love, she referred the evident alarm of the worthy couple to her protégé, and waited with considerable disquietude the result which the agitation of her pretended masters foreboded.

The stranger stood for a moment in the doorway scrutinizing the three persons in the room, apparently to see if his companion were there. The glance that he cast upon them, careless as it was, troubled their hearts. It would have been utterly impossible for anybody, even a brave man, not to admit that nature had bestowed extraordinary powers upon that apparently supernatural being. Although his eyes were set deep beneath the great arches formed by the eyebrows, they were, like those of a vulture, encased in eyelids so broad, and surrounded by a black circle so sharply marked on the upper part of the cheek, that they seemed to protrude. That magic eye had an indescribably piercing, despotic expression, which made a deep impression on the

mind ; a weighty glance, overflowing with thought, a gleaming, lucid glance like that of a serpent or a bird, but a glance that overwhelmed, stupefied one by its lightning-like communication of a terrible misfortune or of some superhuman power. Everything harmonized with that glance of lead and fire, fixed, yet mobile, stern, yet calm. In that great eagle's eye earthly agitations seemed to be extinct, so to speak, and the thin, sharp face also bore the marks of unhappy passions and of great events brought to pass. The nose was perfectly straight and so prolonged that the nostrils seemed to hold it back. The bones of the face were clearly indicated by long straight wrinkles across the fleshless cheeks. Every hollow in his face had a forbidding look. You would have said that it was the dry bed of a torrent where the fierce rush of the waters in times past was attested by the depth of the furrows which denoted some horrible, inward struggle. Like the wake left by a boat on the water, broad folds starting from each side of his nose, accentuated strongly the peculiarities of his face, and gave to his straight, unbending mouth an expression of bitter sadness. Above the tempest depicted on that face, his tranquil brow stood boldly forth and crowned it as with a marble dome.

The stranger maintained that grave, fearless bearing which men acquire who are accustomed to misfortune, who are formed by nature to confront furious crowds unmoved and to look the greatest perils calmly in the face. He seemed to move in a sphere of his

own, wherein he soared above mankind. His gestures, as well as his glance, possessed an irresistible power; his fleshless hands were the hands of a soldier; even as one could but lower one's eyes when his were fixed upon them, so one could but tremble when he addressed a word or a gesture to your soul. As he walked, he was encompassed by a silent majesty which caused him to be taken for a despot without guards, for a god without a halo.

His costume intensified the ideas aroused by the singularity of his face and his bearing. He wore a sort of surplice of black cloth, without sleeves, which was fastened in front and came to his knees, leaving his neck bare, without a band. His doublet, his boots, everything was black. He had a velvet cap like a priest's on his head; it made a circular line above his forehead, and not a single hair appeared beneath it. It was the strictest mourning, the most dismal costume that a man could assume. Except for a long sword, which hung at his side from a leather belt, which could be seen through the opening in the black gown, a churchman might have greeted him as a brother. Although he was not above medium height, he seemed very tall; but, when one looked him in the face, he was gigantic.

"The hour has struck, the boat waits, will you not come?"

At those words, pronounced in poor French, but readily heard in the silence, there was a slight rustling in the other room, and the young man came

down with the rapidity of a bird. When Godefroid appeared, the lady's face flushed purple, she trembled, shuddered, and veiled her face with her hands. Every woman would have shared her emotion at sight of that young man, in reality about twenty years old, but so frail in build and figure that at first glance one would have taken him for a child or a young girl in disguise. His black cap, shaped like the beretta of the Basques, disclosed a forehead as white as snow, whereon shone grace and innocence, the outward expression of a divine gentleness, the reflection of a soul overflowing with faith. A poet's imagination would have sought the star which, in some fairy-tale, a mother begged the fairy godmother to stamp on the brow of her son, abandoned, like Moses, to the mercy of the waves. Love exhaled from the myriads of fair curls which fell over his shoulders. His neck, a veritable swan's neck, was white and admirably curved. His blue eyes, transparent and full of life, seemed to reflect the sky. All his features, the outline of his forehead, were marked by a purity, a refined delicacy, that would have enchanted a painter. The bloom of beauty which, in a woman's face, is an inexhaustible source of emotion, the exquisite purity of outline, the luminous halo surmounting adored features, were combined with a suggestion of masculinity, a power still in its adolescence, which presented delightful contrasts. In short, his was one of those harmonious faces, which, though silent, speak to you and attract you; and yet, if one



scrutinized it with some care, one might detect there the stamp left by a great thought or by passion, in the dull, greenish tinge which made it resemble a young leaf unfolding itself in the sunlight.

Never, therefore, was contrast more abrupt or more striking than that presented by those two beings. One seemed to see a graceful and fragile shrub born in the hollow of an aged, decrepit willow, stripped bare by time, furrowed by the thunderbolt—one of those majestic willows which are the admiration of painters; the timid shrub takes root there, sheltered from the tempest. One was a god, the other an angel; one the poet who feels, the other the poet who translates; a prophet in pain, a Levite at prayer. Both passed from the house in silence.

“Did you see how he hissed?” cried the policeman, when the footsteps of the two strangers could no longer be heard on the sand. “What are they but the devil and his page?”

“*Ouf!*” exclaimed Jacqueline, “I felt as if I had a weight on my heart. I never looked at our guests so carefully. It’s unfortunate for us women that the devil can assume such a pretty face!”

“Oh! throw holy water on him,” cried Tirechair, “and you’ll see him turn into a frog. I am going to tell the whole story to the authorities.”

On hearing that statement, the lady roused herself from the reverie in which she was absorbed, and looked at the official, who was putting on his blue and red frock.

"Whither are you hurrying?" she said.

"To inform the authorities that we have sorcerers in our house, for our own protection."

The unknown began to smile.

"I am the Comtesse Mahaut," she said, rising with a dignity which took the policeman's breath away. "Beware how you inflict the slightest injury on your guests! Honor especially the old man; I have seen him beneath the roof of the king, your lord and master, who greeted him courteously. You will be ill-advised to cause him the slightest inconvenience. As for my presence in your house, mention it not, if you love life."

The countess ceased to speak, and relapsed into her reverie. She soon raised her head and motioned to Jacqueline, and they went up together to Godefroid's room. The lovely countess gazed at the bed, the wooden chairs, the chest, the hangings, the table, with a joy comparable to that of the returning exile when he sees the roofs of his native town clustered at the foot of a hill.

"If you have not deceived me," she observed to Jacqueline, "I promise you a hundred golden crowns."

"Look, madame," replied the landlady, "the poor angel is unsuspecting, here is everything he possesses!"

As she spoke, Josephine opened a drawer in the table and pointed to a number of documents.

"O God of Mercy!" cried the countess, seizing a parchment which suddenly caught her eye and on



which she read: GOTHOFREDUS, COMES GANTI-ACUS,—*Godfrey, Count of Ghent*.

She dropped the parchment, and passed her hand over her forehead; but, evidently considering that she compromised herself by allowing Jacqueline to see her emotion, she resumed her unmoved expression.

“I am satisfied,” she said.

With that she went downstairs and left the house. Tirechair and his wife went to the door, and saw her walking toward the wharf. A boat was moored near by. When the countess’s light footstep approached, a boatman suddenly appeared, assisted the fair apprentice to a seat on a thwart, and rowed up the Seine so vigorously that the boat flew like a swallow.

“What a fool you are!” said Jacqueline, slapping her husband familiarly on the shoulder. “We have earned a hundred golden crowns this morning.”

“I am no more anxious to let lodgings to noblemen than to sorcerers. I don’t know which of the two will bring us to the gallows the faster,” retorted Tirechair, taking his halberd. “I am going to make my round by Champfleuri,” he added. “Ah! may God protect us, and throw in my way some Welshwoman who has put on her gold rings to-night, to shine in the darkness like a glowworm!”

Jacqueline, being left alone in the house, ran hurriedly up to the unknown nobleman’s room to try to find there some light upon this mysterious affair. Like those scholars who take infinite pains to complicate the clear and simple principles of nature, she

had already constructed a vague romance which served to explain the presence of those three persons under her poor roof. She searched the chest, examined everything, but could discover nothing unusual. She simply saw a writing-desk, and several sheets of parchment on the table; but as she could not read, they could give her no information. A womanly feeling led her into the handsome young man's chamber, where she saw from the window her two guests crossing the Seine in the ferryman's boat.

"They are like two statues," she said to herself. "Ah! they are landing at Rue du Fouarre. How nimble he is, the little darling! he jumps ashore like a bullfinch. Beside him the old man is like one of the stone saints in the cathedral. They are going to the old school of the Four Nations. There! now I can't see them.—And this is where the poor cherub lives!" she said, glancing about at the furniture in the room. "What a pretty, winning youth! Ah! these nobles, they are made of different stuff from us."

And Jacqueline went down again after passing her hand over the bed, dusting the chest, and asking herself for the hundredth time in six months:

"What the devil does he do with all his blessed days? He cannot be always gazing at the blue sky and at the stars that God has hung up yonder like lanterns. The dear child has some sorrow. But why do the old master and he almost never speak together?"

Thereupon she lost herself in her thoughts, which, in her woman's brain, became entangled like a skein of silk.

The old and the young man meanwhile had entered one of the schools which made Rue de Fouarre so famous throughout Europe at that time. The illustrious Sigier, the most celebrated professor of mystic theology at the University of Paris, was ascending his chair at the moment that Jacqueline's two tenants reached the school of the Four Nations, held in a large, lower room, on a level with the street. The cold flagstones were covered with clean straw, on which a goodly number of students were kneeling on one knee, the other raised for a desk on which to take down the master's extemporaneous remarks with the aid of those abbreviations which are the despair of modern decipherers. The room was well filled, not only with students, but with the most distinguished men of the clergy, the court, and the legal fraternity. There were foreign scholars, men of the sword, and wealthy bourgeois. There were to be seen those expansive faces, those projecting foreheads, those venerable beards, which inspire us with a sort of religious veneration for our ancestors in presence of portraits painted in the Middle Ages. Thin faces with flashing, deep-set eyes, surmounted by skulls grown yellow in the fatiguing labors of impotent scholasticism, the favorite passion of the age, contrasted with youthful, ardent faces, with men of grave mien, with warlike features, with the rubicund cheeks of an occasional financier. Those

lessons, those dissertations, those theses, produced by the greatest geniuses of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, kindled the enthusiasm of our fathers; they were their bull-fights, their Théâtre des Italiens, their tragedy, their great dancers, their whole amusement, in short. The mystery-plays did not come until after these intellectual struggles, which, it may be, engendered the French stage. An eloquent inspiration which combined the attraction of the human voice skilfully handled, the subtleties of eloquence and bold investigation into God's secrets, satisfied everybody's curiosity in those days, made a profound impression on men's minds, and formed the fashionable entertainment. Theology not only epitomized all the sciences, it was science itself, as grammar formerly was among the Greeks, and offered a future bright with promise to those who distinguished themselves in these duels, where, as in Jacob's case, the orators battled with God's spirit. The great embassies, the arbitrations between sovereigns, the chancellorships, the ecclesiastical dignities, were in the hands of men whose eloquence had been sharpened in theological controversies. The professor's chair was the platform of the age.

That system lived until Rabelais immolated stilted argumentation with his terrible satire, as Cervantes killed chivalry with a written comedy.

To understand that extraordinary epoch and the spirit which dictated its *chefs-d'œuvre*, to-day unknown, great as they were,—in fact, to obtain a full comprehension of it in every part, even in its

barbarism,—it is enough to study the constitutions of the University of Paris and to examine the strange sort of teaching then in vogue there.—Theology was divided into two faculties: the Faculty of THEOLOGY, properly so called, and the Faculty of DECRETALS. The Faculty of Theology had three sections: Scholastic, Canonical, and Mystic. It would be useless to explain the attributes of these different divisions of the science, since one only, the Mystic, is the subject of this Study.

MYSTIC THEOLOGY embraced the whole subject of *Divine Revelations*, and the interpretation of *Mysteries*. This branch of the old-time theology has secretly continued to be held in honor among us: Jacob Bœhm, Swedenborg, Martinez Pasqualis, Saint-Martin, Molinos, Mesdames Guyon, Bourignon, and Krudener, the great sect of Ecstatics and that of the Illuminati, have at divers periods worthily upheld the doctrines of this science, in whose ultimate object there is something terrible and gigantic. To-day, as in the time of Doctor Sigier, the proposition is to furnish man with wings to penetrate the sanctuary where God conceals himself from our eyes.

This digression was necessary to a proper understanding of the scene which the old man and the young man had come from Terrain Notre-Dame to witness; moreover, it will shield from reproach this Study, which some persons given to hasty judgment might suspect of falsehood and charge with hyperbole.

Doctor Sigier was a tall man in the prime of life.

Rescued from oblivion by the records of the University, his face was strikingly similar to Mirabeau's. It was stamped with the seal of animated, fiery, awe-inspiring eloquence. He bore upon his forehead the symbols of a religious nature and a fervent faith which his double lacked. His voice possessed a persuasive sweetness, a ringing, flattering resonance.

At that moment, the light, sparingly admitted by the small-paned windows with lead sashes, cast fitful, changing hues over the assemblage, creating striking contrasts here and there by combinations of light and shade. Here, eyes gleamed in dark corners; there, masses of black hair, touched caressingly by the sun's rays, shone luminous above faces buried in the gloom; and divers bald heads, retaining a slight circlet of white hair, appeared above the crowd like battlements silvered by the moon. All faces were turned toward the doctor, mute, impatient. The monotonous voices of the other professors, whose schools were near at hand, rang out in the silent street like the murmur of the waves. The steps of the two strangers, arriving at that moment, attracted general attention. Doctor Sigier, who was ready to begin, saw the majestic old man standing, looked about for a seat, and seeing none, the course was so great, he left his place, went to him with a respectful air, and led him to a seat on the steps to the chair, giving him his stool. The audience greeted that act of courtesy with a long murmur of approval, recognizing in the old man

the hero of an admirable thesis recently delivered at the Sorbonne. The stranger cast upon the assemblage, above which he towered, that profound glance which was a whole epic of misfortune, and they upon whom it fell felt an indescribable thrill of emotion. The youth who accompanied the old man took his seat upon one of the steps and leaned against the chair in a fascinating attitude of grace and melancholy. The silence became profound; the doorway, the very street, were thronged in a few seconds by a multitude of students who deserted the other classes.

Doctor Sigier was to sum up, in this concluding discourse, the theories he had propounded concerning the Resurrection, and concerning Heaven and Hell, in his preceding lectures. His strange doctrine was in consonance with the tendencies of the time, and satisfied that immoderate thirst for the marvelous which has tormented man in all ages of the world. This effort on the part of man to grasp an infinity which constantly eludes his feeble hands, this last assault of thought upon itself, was a performance worthy of an assemblage in which shone all the bright lights of that age, in which gleamed the most extensive human imaginations.

At first, the doctor simply recalled to the minds of his hearers, in a mild voice and without emphasis, the principal points theretofore established:

“No intellect is precisely equal to any other. Had man the right to call upon his Creator to explain the inequality of the moral forces given to



each man? Without seeking to penetrate fully the designs of God, must we not recognize it to be a fact, that, as a result of their general dissimilarities, intellects are distributed among great spheres? From the sphere where the least powerful intellect flourishes, up to the most translucent, where souls can see the road leading to God, is there not a well-marked gradation of spirituality? and do not the spirits belonging to the same sphere understand one another like brothers, in soul, in flesh, in thought, in sentiment?"

Thereupon the doctor developed some marvellous theories concerning the sympathies. He explained, in biblical language, the phenomena of love, the instinctive repulsions, the ardent attractions which heed not the laws of space, the sudden cohesions of souls which seem to recognize one another. As for the different degrees of strength of which our affections are susceptible, he explained them by the comparative nearness to or distance from the centre of the positions occupied by different beings in their respective circles. He disclosed, by mathematical reasoning, the existence of a far-reaching plan of God in the co-ordination of the various human spheres. Through man, he said, those spheres created an intermediate world between the intelligence of the brute and the intelligence of the angels. According to his theory, the *divine* Word nourished the *spiritual* Word, the *spiritual* Word nourished the *animate* Word, the *animate* Word nourished the *animal* Word, the *animal* Word nourished the *vegetable* Word, and



the *vegetable* Word expressed the life of the *sterile* Word. The successive transformations of the chrysalis to which God thus subjected our souls, and that species of infusorial life which passed from one zone to the other, always increasing in vigor, in spirituality, in keenness of vision, developed confusedly, but with enough of the marvellous to satisfy his inexperienced auditors, the motion imparted to nature by the Most High. With the assistance of numerous passages borrowed from the sacred books, which he used to elucidate his own statements, to express by familiar images the abstract arguments which he lacked, he moved the spirit of God like a torch through the dark places of creation with an eloquence which was peculiar to him, and in accents which implored his audience to be convinced. Unfolding this mysterious system in all its consequences, he furnished the key to all symbols, justified the vocations of individuals, special gifts, geniuses, human talents. Suddenly becoming a physiologist by instinct, he interpreted physical resemblances observed upon human faces by primordial analogies, and by the upward movement of creation. He showed you nature at work, assigned a mission and a future to minerals, to plants, to animals. Bible in hand, after he had spiritualized matter and materialized spirit, after he had proved that God's will enters into everything and inculcated respect for His most trifling works, he admitted the possibility of passing, by means of faith, from one sphere to another.

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Such was the first part of his discourse, and by adroit digressions he applied its doctrines to the feudal system. Religious and profane poetry, the spasmodic eloquence of the time, had full scope in that far-reaching theory, in which all the philosophical systems of antiquity were blended, but from which the doctor brought them forth illumined, purified, changed. The false dogmas of the two principles, as well as those of pantheism, fell before his word, which proclaimed divine *unity*, leaving to God and his angels the knowledge of the ends, the means to which shone so resplendent in the eyes of mankind. Armed with demonstrations by which he interpreted the material world, Doctor Sigier constructed a spiritual world, the spheres of which, gradually rising, separated us from God, as the plant is separated from us by an infinite number of spheres to be traversed. He declared that the sky, the stars, the planets, and the sun were inhabited. In the name of Saint Paul, he invested man with a new power: it was possible for him to ascend from world to world, even to the sources of everlasting life. Jacob's mystic ladder was the religious expression of that divine secret, and at the same time the traditional proof of the fact. He journeyed through space, bearing the excited minds of his hearers on the wings of his words, and brought home to them the sense of the infinite by plunging them into the celestial ocean. He elucidated his conception of hell logically by other circles arranged in an order inverse to that of the resplendent spheres whose aspirations

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were Godward, circles wherein suffering and darkness replaced spirit and light. The tortures were made as clear as the joys. The means of comparison existed in the transitions of human life, in its varying atmospheres of pain and intellect. Thus the most extraordinary fables concerning hell and purgatory were made to seem perfectly natural. He deduced with admirable clearness the fundamental bases of our virtues. The pious man, plodding along in poverty, proud of his pure conscience, always at peace with himself, and persisting in refusing to lie in his heart, despite the notorious examples of triumphant vice, was a chastised, fallen angel, who remembered his origin, looked forward to his reward, performed his allotted task, and fulfilled his glorious mission. The sublime resignation of Christian souls appeared in all its glory. He bound martyrs to the blazing stake, and almost deprived them of all merit by representing their sufferings as naught. He pointed to the *inward* angel in heaven, while the *outward* man was crushed by the headsman's axe. He described, he enabled his hearers to identify by certain divine marks, the angels among men. Then he extorted from the depths of the understanding the real meaning of the word *fall*, which is found in all languages. He reviewed the most prolific traditions in order to demonstrate the truth as to our origin. He explained with great lucidity the passionate longing that all men have to elevate themselves, to ascend, an instinctive ambition, a constantly recurring revelation of our destiny. He

married the whole universe with a glance, and described the essence of God himself, flowing full between the banks like a vast river, from the centre to the extremities, from the extremities to the centre. Nature, he said, was one and compact. In the work most trivial in appearance, as well as in the most magnificent, everything obeyed that law. Every creation reproduced its exact image in miniature,—the flow of sap in the plant, the flow of blood in man's veins, the revolutions of the planets. He heaped up proof upon proof, and always translated his thought by a harmonious and poetic word-picture. Moreover, he marched boldly to meet objections. For instance, he crushed beneath an eloquent interrogation the monuments of our sciences and the supplementary human creations, in whose construction mankind employs the elements of the terrestrial globe. He asked if our wars, our misfortunes, our depravity, prevented the mighty movement imparted by God to all the worlds. He held up the impotence of man to ridicule, by showing that the traces of our efforts were effaced everywhere. He evoked the shades of Tyre, Carthage, and Babylon; he ordered Babel and Jerusalem to appear; he sought in them, but found not, the ephemeral furrows of the ploughshare of civilization. Mankind passed lightly over the world, like a vessel, whose wake disappears on the placid surface of the ocean.

Such were the fundamental ideas of the discourse pronounced by Doctor Sigier, ideas which he enveloped in the mystic language and curious Latin in

vogue at that period. The Scriptures, of which he had made a special study, furnished him with the arms with which he appeared to accelerate the pace of his epoch. He concealed his bold purpose beneath great learning, as if it were a cloak, and his philosophy beneath the purity of his morals. At that moment, having brought his audience face to face with God, having compressed the whole world in a single thought, and almost laid bare the thoughts of the world, he gazed upon the silent, quivering assemblage, and questioned the stranger with a glance. Spurred on, doubtless, by the presence of that extraordinary being, he added these words, free from the corrupt Latin of the Middle Ages:

“Where think you that man can find these pregnant truths, save in the bosom of God himself? What am I? The feeble translator of a single line bequeathed by the greatest of the apostles, a single line among thousands equally resplendent with light. Before our time, Saint Paul had said: *In Deo vivimus, movemur et sumus*.—In God we live and move and have our being.—To-day, with less faith and more knowledge, or with less knowledge and more credulity, we should ask the apostle: ‘What avails this constant movement? Whither does this life, distributed by zones, tend? What is the purpose of this intelligence which begins with the confused graces of marble, and proceeds, from sphere to sphere, to man, to the angel, to God? Where is the source, where is the sea, if life, having reached God through the worlds and the stars, through

matter and spirit, descends once more toward another goal?" You would see the universe on both sides. You would adore the sovereign, on condition that you might sit upon his throne a moment. Madmen that we are! we deny the most intelligent animals the gift of understanding our thoughts and the purpose of our acts, we have no pity for the inhabitants of lower spheres, we drive them out of our own sphere, we deny them the power to divine human thought, and yet we aspire to know the most exalted of all ideas, the Idea of Ideas! Forward then! ascend by faith from globe to globe! fly through space! Thought, love, and faith are its mystic keys. Traverse circle after circle, until you reach the throne! God is more clement than you, He has opened His temple to all His creations. But do not forget the example of Moses. Remove your shoes ere you enter the sanctuary, cleanse yourself of all stain, lay aside your bodily form altogether; otherwise you will be consumed, for God—God is light!"

As Doctor Sigier, with face aflame and uplifted hand, pronounced these glowing words, a ray of sunlight shone in through an open window, and, as if by magic, poured forth a dazzling stream of light, a long, triangular shaft of gold which swathed the audience as with a scarf. There was deafening applause, for one and all accepted that effect of the sunset as a miracle. A cry arose from every mouth:

*"Vivat! vivat!"*

The very sky seemed to applaud. Godefroid glanced with a feeling of profound respect from the



old man to Doctor Sigier, as they stood talking together in undertones.

"Glory to the master!" said the stranger.

"What is ephemeral glory?" rejoined Sigier.

"I would that I could give a lasting form to my gratitude," said the old man.

"Very well, let me have a line from you!" replied the doctor; "that will give me immortality among men."

"Ah! but can one give what one has not?" cried the stranger.

Attended by the crowd which, like courtiers in attendance upon a king, followed the three at a respectful distance, Godefroid, the old man, and Sigier walked toward the muddy river-bank where there were as yet no houses, and where the ferryman was awaiting them. The doctor and the stranger talked neither in Latin nor in the Gallic language, but conversed gravely in an unknown tongue. They alternately raised their hands toward heaven and pointed them at the ground. More than once, Sigier, to whom the windings of the bank were familiar, guided the old man with especial care to the narrow planks thrown as bridges over the puddles; the audience watched them with interest, and some of the students envied the younger man the privilege of accompanying those two monarchs of oratory. At last, the doctor waved his hand to the old man and looked after the ferry-boat as it left the shore.

While the boat floated on the broad bosom of the Seine, communicating its movement to the soul, the

sun, like a conflagration on the horizon, burst through the clouds, poured torrents of light over the whole landscape, tinged with its red and brown tints the roofs of slate and the roofs of thatch, edged Philippe-Auguste's towers with flame, inundated the heavens, dyed the river, made the grass and foliage gleam, and aroused the half-slumbering insects. That long sheaf of light set the clouds on fire. It was like the last line of the daily hymn. No heart but must have felt a thrill; at that moment, nature was sublime. Gazing at that spectacle, the stranger's eyes were wet with the tiniest of human tears. Godefroid also wept, his trembling hand met the old man's, who turned and allowed him to see his emotion; but, doubtless, to rescue his manly dignity, which he feared that he might have compromised, he said in a deep voice:

"I weep for my country, I am an exile! Young man, at this very hour of the day I left my fatherland. But there, at this hour, the glowworms come forth from their fragile abodes and suspend themselves, like diamonds, from the twigs of the gladiolus. At this hour, the breeze, sweet as the sweetest poetry, rises from a valley swathed in light, exhaling delicious perfumes. On the horizon, I saw a golden city like the heavenly Jerusalem, a city whose name must never issue from my mouth. There, too, a river winds. Where now are that city and its monuments, that river whose fascinating détours, whose stretches of bluish water blended, married, separated,—a harmonious contest which



rejoiced my eyes and inspired thoughts of love? Then the waves assumed fantastic shades of color under the sky at sunset, and formed capricious pictures. The stars gave forth a caressing radiance, the moon spread its graceful snares on every side, it gave a different life to the trees, to colors and to forms, and changed the aspect of the gleaming waters, the silent hillsides, the eloquent edifices. The city talked and sparkled; it beckoned me to return! Pillars of smoke arose by antique columns whose marble whiteness gleamed in the bosom of the night; the horizon line could be distinguished through the evening mists; all was harmony and mystery. Nature did not bid me farewell, she wished to detain me. Ah! she was everything to me: mother and child, spouse and renown! The very bells wept for my outlawry. O marvellous land! it is as lovely as the sky! From that hour, the universe has been my dungeon. My beloved country, why didst thou banish me?—But I will triumph!" he cried, uttering the words with such an accent of conviction and in such a ringing tone that the boatman jumped, thinking that he heard the blast of a trumpet.

The old man was standing in a prophetic attitude and looking at the sky toward the south, pointing to his fatherland through the vast expanse. The ascetic pallor of his face had given place to the flush of triumph, his eyes shone, he was as sublime as a lion with bristling mane.

"And thou, poor child," he continued, glancing at Godefroid, whose cheeks were bordered by a chaplet

of glistening tear-drops, "hast thou, like myself, studied life on blood-stained pages? Why weep? What canst thou regret at thy age?"

"Alas!" said Godefroid, "I regret a country lovelier than all the countries on earth, a country which I have never seen, but which I remember. Ah! if I could wing my flight through space, I would go—"

"Where?" said the exile.

"Up yonder," replied the child.

The old man started at the answer, rested his weighty glance on the youth, and imposed silence upon him. They held converse together by virtue of an inexplicable effusion of soul, listening to each other's longings in the bosom of a pregnant silence, and travelled together fraternally like two doves that soar through the sky on a single pair of wings, until the boat, as it grated on the sandy shore, roused them from their profound reverie. Buried in their thoughts, they walked toward Tirechair's house.

"And so," said the tall stranger to himself, "this poor little fellow deems himself an angel exiled from heaven! And who among us has the right to undeceive him? Have I? I who am so often borne by a magic power far from earth? I who belong to God? I who am a mystery to myself? Have I not seen the fairest of angels living in this mire? Is this child more or less insane than I? Has he taken a bolder step forward in faith? He believes, his belief will lead him, doubtless, into some brightly-lighted path like that in which I walk. But, though he be as beautiful

as an angel, is he not too weak to maintain so fierce a contest?"

Awed by the presence of his companion, whose thunderous voice expressed his own thoughts as the lightning-flash translates the decrees of Heaven, the child contented himself with gazing at the stars with the eyes of a lover. Overwhelmed by an excessive refinement of feeling which crushed the impulses of his heart, he was as weak and fearful as a gnat in the sunlight. Sigier's voice had deduced for them both the mysteries of the moral world with divine lucidity; the tall old man clothed them in glory; the child felt them within himself without the power to give expression to them; all three expressed by living images science, poetry, sentiment.

On returning to the house, the stranger locked himself into his room, lighted his inspiring lamp, and abandoned himself to the demon of work, calling upon the silence for words, upon the night for ideas. Godefroid, seated on his window-sill, alternately gazed at the moon's reflection in the water and studied the mysteries of the sky. In the throes of one of those fits of ecstasy which were of common occurrence with him, he travelled from sphere to sphere, from vision to vision, listening and fancying that he heard low rustlings and angels' voices, seeing or fancying that he saw gleams of divine light in which he lost his way, struggling to reach the distant point, source of all light, essence of all harmony. Soon the great uproar of Paris, brought to his ears

by the waters of the Seine, began to die away, the lights in the houses were extinguished one by one, silence reigned throughout the whole vast city, which fell asleep like a tired giant. The clocks struck twelve. The slightest sound, the fall of a leaf or the flight of a jackdaw changing its place among the towers of Notre-Dame, would have recalled the stranger's mind to earth, would have caused the child to descend from the celestial heights to which his soul had soared on the wings of ecstasy.

At that moment, the old man was horrified to hear a groan in the adjoining room, followed by the fall of a heavy weight which the exile's practised ear recognized as that of a human body. He rushed from his own room into Godefroid's, and saw him lying, a shapeless mass, with a long cord tied about his neck and trailing on the floor. When he had loosened the cord, the child opened his eyes.

"Where am I?" he asked, with a joyful expression.

"In your own room," said the old man, staring in amazement at Godefroid's neck, and at the nail to which the cord had been fastened and to which it was still attached.

"In heaven?" queried the child, in a blissful, dreamy voice.

"No, on earth," the old man replied.

Godefroid walked in the shaft of light cast by the moon across the room, to the open window, and looked out again upon the shimmering Seine, the

willows and the rushes on the shore. A mist was rising over the river like a canopy of smoke. At that spectacle, most depressing to him, he folded his hands upon his breast in a despairing attitude; the old man walked to his side, amazement depicted on every feature.

“Did you try to kill yourself?” he asked.

“Yes,” replied Godefroid, allowing the stranger to pass his hands several times over his neck, to feel the spot where the cord had been.

Although there were some slight contusions, the young man must have suffered very little. The old man saw that the nail had yielded at once under the weight of the body, and that that fatal attempt had resulted in a fall attended by no danger.

“But why, my dear child, did you try to kill yourself?”

“Ah!” replied Godefroid, no longer restraining the tears with which his eyes were filled, “I heard a voice from on high! It called me by my name! It had never called me by name before, but this time it invited me to heaven! Ah! how sweet that voice is!—As I could not fly up to heaven,” he added, with an artless gesture, “I took the only road to God that is open to us.”

“Oh! my child! sublime child!” cried the old man, throwing his arms about Godefroid and straining him enthusiastically to his heart. “Thou art a poet, thou canst ride fearlessly upon the tempest! Thy poetry comes not from the heart! Thine ardent, living thoughts, thy creations march onward and

grow greater in thy mind. Confide not thy ideas to the common herd! be thou priest, victim, altar, all in one! Thou knowest the heavens, dost thou not? Thou hast seen those myriads of angels with the white wings and golden zithers, who fly side by side toward the throne, and thou hast often admired their wings, which move and flutter at God's voice like the graceful tree-tops of the forest before the storm. Ah! how beautiful is boundless space! is it not so?"

The old man pressed Godefroid's hand convulsively, and together they gazed in rapt contemplation at the firmament, whose stars seemed to pour forth caressing poems whose melodies they could hear.

"Oh! to see God!" cried Godefroid, softly.

"Child!" rejoined the stranger, suddenly, in a stern voice, "hast thou so soon forgotten the sacred teachings of our worthy master, Doctor Sigier? If we would return, thou to thy heavenly country, I to my terrestrial country, must we not obey the voice of God? Let us go forward with resignation over the rough roads where His all-powerful finger has marked our course. Dost thou not shudder at thought of the peril to which thou didst expose thyself? Appearing unsummoned, saying: 'Here am I!' before the appointed time, thou wouldst have fallen back into a lower world than that in which thou flutterest to-day. Poor, wandering cherub, shouldst thou not bless God for having cast thy lines in a world where thou dost hear none but heavenly harmonies? Art thou not pure as a diamond, lovely as a flower? Ah! if, like me, thou

knewest naught but the city of sorrows! I have worn my heart out walking through its streets. Oh! to pry into tombs in order to ask them to reveal horrible secrets; to wipe the hands tainted with blood; to count them every night; to see them raised beseechingly to me, imploring a pardon which I cannot grant; to study the convulsions of the assassin and his victim's dying shrieks; to listen to frightful sounds and ghastly silences, the silence of a father devouring his dead sons; to question the laughter of the damned; to see human forms amid discolored masses, which crime has disfigured and distorted; to learn words which living men cannot hear and live; to evoke the dead incessantly, to interpret and to judge them—tell me, is that life?"

"Stay," cried Godefroid, "I cannot look at you, listen to you longer! My reason is going astray, my sight is failing. You kindle within me a fire which consumes me."

"Nevertheless, I must continue," said the old man, moving his hand with an extraordinary gesture which produced on the youth the effect of a spell.

For a moment the stranger fixed his great, lifeless eyes upon Godefroid in a searching gaze; then he pointed his finger at the ground: one would have expected to see a yawning abyss open at his command. He stood for a moment in the vague, hesitating light of the moon, which made his forehead gleam and emit a sort of solar ray. At first, an almost contemptuous expression flitted across the sombre folds of his face, but his gaze soon assumed



that fixity which seems to indicate the presence of an object invisible to the ordinary organs of sight. Surely his eyes were then fixed upon the distant pictures which the tomb has in reserve for us. Never, perhaps, had that man appeared so grand. A terrible struggle wrought confusion in his mind and reacted upon his external form; and, powerful as he seemed to be, he bent as a blade of grass bends before the breeze that heralds the storm. Godefroid remained silent, motionless, fascinated; an incomprehensible power nailed him to the floor; and, as when our rapt attention takes us out of ourselves, at the spectacle of a conflagration or a battle, he was no longer conscious of his own body.

“Wouldst thou have me tell thee the destiny to which thy steps are bearing thee, poor angel of love? Listen! It has been given to me to view the boundless expanse of space, the bottomless abysses wherein human creations are swallowed up, that shoreless sea toward which our great river of men and angels rushes on. I—poor worm!—was preserved from death, when traversing the regions of eternal punishment, by the cloak of an immortal, the garment of glory won by genius, which age transmits to age. When I passed through the regions of light where the blessed congregate, a woman’s love, an angel’s wings, upheld me; borne upon that angel’s heart, I was enabled to taste those ineffable pleasures whose embrace is more dangerous to us mortals than is the agony of the world of the wicked. When I made my pilgrimage through the darksome regions



below, I arrived at last, from sorrow to sorrow, from crime to crime, from punishment to punishment, from awful silences to heart-rending shrieks, at the uppermost abyss in the circle of hell. Already I saw afar off the resplendent light of Paradise shining at an enormous distance; I was in darkness, but on the outskirts of the light. Upward I flew, borne by my guide, impelled by a power similar to that which, in our dreams, hurries us into spheres invisible to the eyes of the body. The halo which encircled our brows made the shadows fly as we passed, like an impalpable dust. Far away, the suns of all the worlds cast no brighter light than the glowworms of my native country. I was just at the beginning of the fields of air where, toward Paradise, the masses of light are multiplied, where one cleaves the azure with ease, where innumerable worlds spring up like flowers in a meadow. There, on the last circular line within the domain of the phantoms, whom I was about to leave behind me like griefs which one seeks to forget, I saw a tall form. Standing in an attitude of intense eagerness, that shade devoured space with his ardent gaze, his feet still confined by the power of God to the last point of that line where he put forth incessantly the painful tension with which we gather up our strength when we are about to take our spring, like a bird ready to fly. I recognized a man; he did not look at us, did not hear us; all his muscles quivered and throbbed; every instant, although he did not take a single step, he seemed to feel the fatigue of traversing the infinite expanse

which separated him from Paradise, upon which his eyes were fixed unchangeably, for he fancied that he saw a beloved image there. At the last door of hell as at the first, I read an expression of despair in hope. The miserable wretch was so horribly crushed by some force, I know not what, that his misery passed into my bones and froze my blood. I sought refuge with my guide, whose protecting wings restored me to tranquillity and silence. Like the mother whose piercing eye sees the vulture in the air or divines his presence, the shade uttered a joyful cry. We looked where it looked, and we saw something like a sapphire floating above our heads in the abysses of light. That brilliant star descended with the velocity of a sunbeam when the luminary appears above the horizon in the morning, and his first rays shoot stealthily over our earth. The SPLENDOR became distinct, it increased in size; soon I saw the glorious cloud in whose bosom the angels travel, a sort of glistening smoke emanating from their divine substance, and emitting here and there tiny tongues of flame. A noble face, whose brilliancy it is impossible to endure until one has donned the cloak, the laurel wreath, or the palm, attributes of the Powers, arose above that cloud, white and pure as the driven snow. It was a light within the light! Its quivering wings sowed dazzling waves of brilliancy in the spheres through which it passed, as God's glance passes through the worlds. At last I saw the archangel in his glory! The flower of immortal beauty which embellishes the angels of the

Spirit bloomed resplendent in him. He held in one hand a green palm-branch, and in the other a flaming sword: the palm to decorate the pardoned shade; the sword to force back all the legions of hell with a single gesture. At his approach, we smelt the perfumes of heaven, which fell like dew. In the region where the angel dwelt, the air assumed the color of opal, and moved in undulating waves whose impulsion came from him. He arrived, looked at the shade, and said:

“‘Until to-morrow!’

“Then he turned heavenward with a graceful movement, spread his wings, flew through the spheres as a ship cleaves the waves, affording the exiles abandoned on some deserted shore hardly a glimpse of its white sails. The shade uttered horrible shrieks to which the damned replied, from the sphere buried deepest in the immensity of the worlds of sorrow, to that more tranquil sphere on whose surface we were. The most poignant of all forms of agony had appealed to all the others. The uproar increased, with a roaring as of a sea of fire which served as a background to the awful chorus of unnumbered millions of souls in torment. Then suddenly the shade flew away through the *città dolente* and descended from his place to the uttermost depths of hell; he as suddenly ascended again, returned, plunged anew among the innumerable circles, and flew through them in all directions, like a vulture which, when put in an aviary for the first time, exhausts itself in vain struggles. The shade

was entitled to wander thus, and could pass through all the zones of hell, freezing, fetid, burning, without sharing in their torments; he glided through that boundless expanse as a sunbeam forces its way through dark clouds.

“ ‘God has inflicted no punishment upon him,’ the master said to me; ‘but not one of the souls whose torments thou hast witnessed one after another, would exchange his punishment for the hope beneath which that soul is giving way.’

“At that moment, the shade came near us once more, drawn thither by an irresistible force which condemned him to wither on the confines of hell. My divine guide, who understood my curiosity, touched with his branch the unhappy shade, engrossed, perhaps, in measuring the ages of misery that lay between that moment and the ever-fleeting to-morrow. He started and bestowed upon us a glance overflowing with all the tears he had already shed.

“ ‘You wish to know the story of my misfortunes?’ said the shade, in a melancholy voice. ‘Oh! I love to tell it. I am here, Teresa is up yonder! that is all. On earth we were happy, we were always together. When I first saw my dear Teresa Donati, she was ten years old. We loved each other then, although we knew not what love was. Our lives were one: I turned pale with her pallor, I was happy in her joy; together we gave ourselves up to the charm of thinking, of feeling, and we learned love from each other. We were married

in Cremona; we never knew each other's lips unadorned with the pearls of laughter, our eyes always sparkled, our heads were no more separated than our wishes; they were always side by side when we were reading, our footsteps coincided when we walked. Life was one long kiss, our house was a couch. One day, Teresa turned pale, and said to me for the first time:

“““I am in pain!”

““And I felt no pain. She did not rise again. I saw her lovely features change, her golden hair blanch, and I did not die. She smiled to conceal her suffering from me; but I read it in the azure depths of her eyes, whose slightest trembling I could interpret. She said to me: “I love thee, Honorino!” even while the color was fading from her lips; she was still holding my hand in hers when death turned them to stone. I killed myself instantly, so that she might not lie alone in her bed in the sepulchre, beneath her sheet of marble. Teresa is up yonder, I am here. I did not wish to leave her, but God has parted us; why, then, have joined us on earth? He is jealous! Doubtless, Paradise became much more beautiful on the day when Teresa ascended thither. Do you see her? She is sad in her happiness, she has not me! Paradise must seem a terrible desert to her!”

““Master,” said I, weeping, for I was thinking of my own loves, ‘when this man shall desire Paradise solely to be with God, will he not be set free?’

"The father of poetry bowed gently in token of assent. We flew away, cleaving the air, with no more noise than the birds that pass over our heads when we lie stretched out under a tree. In vain should we have tried to prevent the ill-fated shade from blaspheming so. It is one of the misfortunes of the angels of darkness never to see the light, even when they are encompassed by it. He would not have understood our words."

At that moment, the rapid hoof-beats of several horses rang out amid the silence, the dog barked, Tirechair's voice replied sulkily; the horsemen descended and knocked on the door, and their blows produced the effect of an unexpected report. The two exiles, the two poets, fell to the earth through the vast space that separates us from the heavens. The painful sensation caused by their fall coursed through their veins like another current of blood, but with a hissing sound, and filled with sharp, lacerating points. To them the pain was in some sense an electrical disturbance. The heavy, ringing step of a man-at-arms, whose sword and cuirass and spurs clashed noisily, echoed through the hall; and soon a soldier appeared before the astonished stranger.

"We can return to Florence," said this man, whose hoarse voice had a soft sound when it pronounced the Italian words.

"What sayest thou?" asked the tall old man.

"The *Whites* are triumphant!"

"Thou art not mistaken?" rejoined the poet.

"No, dear Dante!" replied the soldier, in whose warlike voice there was the excitement of battle and the joy of victory.

"To Florence! to Florence! O my Florence!" eagerly exclaimed DANTE ALIGHIERI; and he rose to his feet, looked out, fancied that he saw Italy, and assumed gigantic proportions.

"Ah! when shall I be in heaven?" said Godefroid, kneeling on the floor before the immortal poet, like an angel before the sanctuary.

"Come to Florence!" said Dante in a compassionate voice. "When thou seest its amorous landscapes from the heights of Fiesole, thou wilt fancy thyself in Paradise."

The soldier smiled. For the first, perhaps the only time, Dante's gloomy, awe-inspiring face expressed a joyous thought; on his eyes and his brow were the pictures of happiness of which he was so nobly lavish in his *Paradiso*. Perhaps it seemed to him that he could hear the voice of Beatrice.

At that moment, a woman's light step and the rustling of a dress broke the silence. The first rays of dawn were beginning to appear. The lovely Comtesse Mahaut entered, and ran to Godefroid.

"Come, my child, my son! I am at liberty to acknowledge thee now! Thy birth is recognized, thy rights are upheld by the King of France, and thou shalt find a paradise in thy mother's heart!"

"I recognize *the voice* of Heaven!" cried the youth, beside himself with joy.



That exclamation aroused Dante, who glanced at the young man clasped in the countess's arms; he bade them adieu with a glance, and left his companion on his mother's bosom.

"Let us away!" he cried in a voice of thunder.  
"Death to the Guelphs!"

Paris, October 1831.

LOUIS LAMBERT



DEDICATION

*ET NUNC ET SEMPER DILECTÆ DICATUM*





Louis Lambert was born in 1797, at Montoire, a small town in the Vendômois, where his father conducted a tannery of modest size, and expected that his son would succeed him in business; but the predilection for study which he manifested very early in life, caused a modification of the paternal plan. Moreover, the tanner and his wife loved Louis as parents usually love an only son, and opposed his will in nothing. The Old and New Testament had fallen into his hands at the age of five; and those two books, in which so many books are contained, had determined his destiny. Did that childish imagination comprehend the mysterious profundity of the Scriptures? could it follow the Holy Spirit in its flight through the worlds? was it attracted simply by the romantic fascination that abounds in those oriental poems? or did that soul, in its pristine innocence, sympathize with the sublime religious sentiment which divine hands have strewn through those books? For some readers our narrative will solve these questions. One fact resulted from this early reading of the Bible: Louis went all about Montoire begging for books, which he obtained by virtue of that seductiveness of manner the secret of which belongs to children alone, and which no one can resist. Engrossed in these studies, in which he was guided by no older person, he reached his tenth

year. At that period, substitutes for military service were hard to obtain; wealthy families commonly procured them in advance, in order to be supplied when the draft was ordered. As the moderate means of the poor tanners would not allow them to purchase a substitute for their son, they concluded that the ecclesiastical profession was the only resource left them by the law to save him from the conscription, and they sent him, in 1807, to his maternal uncle, the curé of Mer, another small town, situated on the Loire, near Blois. That course satisfied both Louis's passion for science and his parents' desire to avoid exposing him to the horrible risks of war; moreover, his studious tastes and his precocious intelligence justified the hope that he would make a great fortune in the Church.

After remaining about three years with his uncle, a former Oratorian and a man of considerable learning, Louis left him early in 1811, to enter the college of Vendôme, his expenses at that institution being assumed by Madame de Staël.

For the patronage of that illustrious woman, Lambert was indebted to chance, or doubtless to Providence, which always finds a way to smooth the path of neglected genius. But, to us, whose glances do not go beyond the superficial aspect of human affairs, these vicissitudes, of which so many examples are presented to us in the lives of great men, seem to be simply the result of a wholly physical phenomenon; and to most biographers, the head of a man of genius stands out from the common herd like a



lovely plant in the fields which attracts the eyes of a botanist by its brilliant coloring. This comparison may be applied to the fortunes of Louis Lambert, who ordinarily passed at his father's house such vacations as his uncle allowed him; but instead of abandoning himself, as schoolboys generally do, to the delights of that *far niente*, which allures us all, old or young, he would take his books and a piece of bread early in the morning and go off into the woods to read and meditate, in order to avoid the remonstrances of his mother, to whom such unremitting study seemed dangerous. Marvellous maternal instinct! By that time, reading had become in Louis's case a sort of hunger which nothing could satisfy; he devoured books of all sorts, and fed indiscriminately upon works religious, historical, philosophical, and physical. He has told me that he took incredible pleasure in reading dictionaries when he had nothing else to read, and I readily believed him. What school-boy has not many a time found enjoyment in searching for the meaning of an unfamiliar noun? The analysis of a word, its derivation, its history, furnished Lambert with food for a long reverie. But it was not the instinctive reverie by which a child accustoms himself to the phenomena of life, gathers courage to grapple with moral or physical perceptions—an involuntary cultivation of the mind which bears fruit later both in the understanding and in the character; no: Louis embraced the facts themselves, he explained them to himself after seeking out their causes and their purposes with the perspicacity of a

savage. And so, by virtue of one of those appalling freaks in which nature sometimes indulges, and which demonstrated the anomaly of his existence, he was able, at the age of fourteen, to enounce fluently ideas whose profundity was not made clear to me until long after.

"Often," he once said to me, speaking of his readings, "I have made delightful journeys, embarked on a word in the abysses of the past, like an insect perched on a blade of grass floating at the will of a stream. I have started from Greece, have travelled to Rome, and down through the vast expanse of modern times. What a noble book one could produce by narrating the life and adventures of a word! Doubtless it has received different impressions from the events in which it has seen service; it has aroused different ideas in different places; but how much more grand it is to consider it under the threefold aspect of soul, body, and motion! If we simply look at it, aside from its functions, its acts, and its effects, does it not furnish matter for an ocean of reflections? Most words are tinged with the ideas which they represent externally; to what genius do we owe them? If a great intellect is needed to create a word, how old must human speech be? The assemblage of letters, their shapes, the appearance which they give to a word, represent exactly, in accordance with the character of each people, unknown beings of whom we have a vague remembrance. Who can explain to us philosophically the transition from sensation to thought, from thought to words, from words

to their expression in hieroglyphics, from hieroglyphics to the alphabet, from the alphabet to written eloquence, whose beauty consists in a succession of images classified by rhetoricians, which are, as it were, the hieroglyphics of thought? The ancient method of painting ideas, of representing them by zoölogical forms, led to the use of the first symbols by oriental peoples in writing their languages. In that way it has left some traces, preserved by tradition, in our modern languages, all of which have shared in the spoils of the original word of primitive nations, a majestic, solemn word, whose majesty and solemnity diminish as societies grow older; whose echoes, so sonorous in the Hebrew Bible, so beautiful in ancient Greece, grow feebler as we follow the progress of our successive civilizations. Do we owe to that ancient spirit the mysteries buried in all human speech? Is there not a sort of fanciful uprightness in the word TRUE—*vrai*?—is there not in its brevity a vague image of chaste nudity, of the simplicity of the true in everything? That monosyllable exhales an indefinable refreshing coolness. I have taken as an example the expression of an abstract idea, preferring not to explain the problem by a word which would make it too easy to understand, like the word FLIGHT—*vol*—for instance, which speaks entirely to the senses. Is it not so with every word? they are all stamped with a living power which they derive from the soul, and which they restore to it by the mysteries of a marvellous action and reaction between speech and

thought. We might say that the word is a lover who drinks from his mistress's lips as much love as he communicates to her. By their appearance alone, words reproduce in our brains the creations which they serve as clothing. Like all beings, they have but one place where their properties can act and develop freely. But it may be that this subject embraces a whole science!"

And he shrugged his shoulders as if to say: "We are both too great and too small!"

Louis's passion for reading had been abundantly gratified, by the way. The curé of Mer possessed some two or three thousand volumes. That treasure was derived from the pillaging of the neighboring abbeys and châteaux during the Revolution. In the quality of a priest who had taken the oath, the goodman had been enabled to cull the best works from the valuable collections which were then sold by weight. In three years, Louis Lambert had assimilated the substance of those books in his uncle's library which were worth reading. The absorption of ideas by reading had become in him a curious phenomenon; his eye took in seven or eight lines at once, and his mind grasped their meaning with a swiftness equal to that of his glance; often, indeed, a single word in a sentence was sufficient to enable him to grasp its pith. His memory was prodigious. He remembered with equal accuracy thoughts acquired by reading, and those suggested by reflection or conversation. In short, he possessed all varieties of memory, of place, of names, of words,

of things, of faces. Not only could he recall objects at will, but he actually saw them again within himself, in the same situation, lighted and colored as they were when he saw them with his eyes. That power applied equally to the most impalpable processes of the understanding. He remembered, to use his own expression, not only the location of thoughts in the book from which he had taken them, but also his frame of mind at distant periods. Thus his memory possessed the most extraordinary faculty of tracing back the progress and the entire life of his mind, from the first idea that it ever acquired down to the last that had blossomed there, from the most confused to the most lucid. His brain, accustomed when still young to the difficult process of concentration of the human forces, derived from that rich storehouse a multitude of images admirable in their reality and freshness, upon which he fed while his periods of clear-sighted contemplation lasted.

"When I choose," he said in his peculiar language, to which the treasures of his memory imparted a premature originality, "I draw a veil over my eyes. I suddenly enter within myself and find there a dark chamber where the accidents of nature are reproduced in a purer form than that under which they first appeared to my external senses."

At the age of twelve, his imagination, stimulated by the perpetual exercise of his faculties, had developed to the point of enabling him to form ideas so exact concerning the things which he learned by reading only, that the image stamped upon his

mind would have been no more vivid if he had really seen them, either because he proceeded by analogy or because he was endowed with a species of second-sight by virtue of which he embraced all nature.

“When I read the story of the battle of Austerlitz,” he said to me one day, “I saw all its details. The roar of the cannon, the yells of the combatants, rang in my ears and stirred my entrails; I smelt the powder, I heard the tramp of the horses, and the voices of men; I saw and admired the lovely plain whereon nations in arms were arrayed against one another, as if I were standing on the hill of Santon. The spectacle seemed to me as appalling as a passage from the Apocalypse.”

When he thus put forth all his powers in reading, he lost, in a certain sense, the consciousness of his physical life, and no longer existed save by the all-powerful working of his interior organs, whose scope of action was immeasurably extended; as he himself expressed it, *he left space behind him*. But I do not wish to anticipate my narrative as to the intellectual phases of his life. Already, contrary to my purpose, I have inverted the order in which I should properly tell the story of this man who transported all his action into thought, as others expend their whole lives in action.

A powerful inclination drew him in the direction of mysterious works.

“*Abyssus abyssum*,” he said to me. “Our minds are abysses which delight in abysses. Children,



men, old men, we are always greedy for mysteries under whatever form they present themselves."

That predilection would have been fatal to him, if he had allowed himself to judge his life according to ordinary rules, and to measure another's happiness with the measure he used for his own, or according to social prejudices. That taste for the things of heaven—another form of words which he often employed—that *mens divini* was due, perhaps, to the influence exerted over his mind by the first books he read at his uncle's. Saint Theresa and Madame Guyon succeeded the Bible, received the first-fruits of his maturer intelligence, and accustomed him to those intense reactions of the soul whose ecstatic state is at the same time cause and result. Those studies, that taste, exalted and purified his heart, ennobled it, gave it an appetite for the divine nature, and inculcated in it the almost feminine delicacy which is instinctive in great men; it may be that their sublimity is simply the need of self-sacrifice, which distinguishes woman, transferred to higher things. Thanks to these first impressions, Louis remained pure while he was at college. That noble virginity of the senses necessarily resulted in enriching the warm current of his blood and increasing the power of his thought.

Baronne de Staël, who was banished to a distance of forty leagues from Paris, passed several months at a country estate near Vendôme. One day, when she was out for a walk, she met the tanner's son on the outskirts of the park, almost in rags, absorbed by

a book. That book was a translation of *Heaven and Hell*. At that epoch, Messieurs Saint-Martin, de Gence, and some other French writers, half-German, were almost the only persons in the French Empire to whom the name of Swedenborg was known. Madame de Staël, in her astonishment, seized the book with the abruptness of manner with which she made it a point to accompany her questions, her glances, her gestures; then, with a glance at Lambert, she said:

“Do you understand this book?”

“Do you pray to God?” the child retorted.

“Why—yes.”

“Do you understand Him?”

The baroness was stricken dumb for a moment; then she sat down beside Lambert and began to talk with him. Unluckily, my memory, although it is quite extensive, is far from being as reliable as my friend's, and I have forgotten the whole of the conversation except the first words. That meeting was of a nature to make a deep impression on Madame de Staël; on her return to the château, she hardly mentioned it, notwithstanding the necessity for giving expression to her thoughts, which, in her case, degenerated into loquacity; but she seemed to be seriously preoccupied by it. The only person still living who remembers this incident, and whom I questioned in order to learn the few words which then escaped Madame de Staël, with difficulty succeeded in recalling this remark which the baroness made respecting Lambert: “He is a true seer.”



In the eyes of the world, Louis did not justify the great hopes he had aroused in his patroness. The ephemeral predilection she displayed for him was looked upon, therefore, as a woman's caprice, as one of those freaks which are characteristic of artists. Madame de Staël tried to tear Louis Lambert away from the Emperor and the Church, in order to give him back to the noble destiny which, she said, awaited him; for she already looked upon him as a new Moses rescued from the water. Before her departure, she requested one of her friends, Monsieur de Corbigny, then prefect at Blois, to see that her Moses was entered at the college of Vendôme at the proper time; then she probably forgot him.

Lambert entered at the age of fourteen, early in 1811, and should have graduated at the close of 1814, after finishing his philosophical course. I doubt whether he received, during that whole period, a single reminder of his benefactress's existence, assuming that it was a benefaction to pay for a child's schooling for three years without thinking of his future, after turning him aside from a career in which he would, perhaps, have made a name. The circumstances of the time and Louis Lambert's character will go far toward absolving Madame de Staël both for her heedlessness and her generosity. The person she had chosen to act as intermediary in her relations with the child left Blois just as he left the college. The political events of the time sufficiently justified that person's indifference to the baroness's protégé. The author of *Corinne* heard nothing more

of her little Moses. The hundred louis which she gave to Monsieur de Corbigny—who died, I believe, in 1812—was not a sum of sufficient importance to remain in Madame de Staël's memory, for her exalted mind had returned to its favorite pasturage, and all her interests were constantly at stake during the kaleidoscopic changes of the years 1814 and 1815. At that time, Louis Lambert was both too poor and too proud to seek out his benefactress, who was travelling through Europe. Nevertheless, he came on foot from Blois to Paris, with the purpose of seeing her, but arrived, unfortunately, on the very day that the baroness died. Two letters written by him had remained unanswered. Thus the remembrance of Madame de Staël's kindly intentions toward Louis subsisted only in a few young minds which were impressed as mine was by the marvellous nature of the story. One must have been at our college to understand the effect usually produced on our minds by the announcement of a *new boy*, and the particular impression which Lambert's coming made upon us.

At this point, a few facts concerning the primitive laws governing our institution, formerly half-military and half-religious, become necessary in order to explain the new life that Lambert was to lead there. Before the Revolution, the order of Oratorians, which was devoted, like the order of Jesus, to public education, and which succeeded the Jesuits in some places, possessed several provincial establishments, the most famous of which were the colleges of Vendôme, Tournon, La Flèche, Pont-Levoy, Sorrèze, and Juilly.

That of Vendôme, as well as the others, educated a certain number of cadets for the army, I believe. The abolition of teaching bodies, decreed by the Convention, had very little effect on the institution at Vendôme. When the first crisis had passed, the college recovered its buildings, some Oratorians who were scattered about the neighborhood returned and rehabilitated it, retaining the former regulations, customs, usages, and manners which gave to that college an atmosphere to which I never saw anything at all similar in any of the schools to which I went after leaving Vendôme.

Situated in the centre of the town, on the little river Loir, which bathes the foot of its buildings, the college forms a vast enclosure carefully closed and locked and containing the necessary appurtenances of an institution of that description: a chapel, a lecture-room, an infirmary, a bakery, gardens, and water-courses. It is the most celebrated seat of learning of which the central provinces can boast, and is fed by them and by our colonies. It is too far away for parents to come frequently to see their children.

The rules did not permit vacations to be passed away from the college. After the pupils were once in, they did not go out until their studies were completed. With the exception of walks out of bounds under the escort of the Fathers, everything was so arranged as to afford the pupils the advantages of conventual discipline. In my day, the castigator was still a living memory, and the classic leather ferule

played its terrible rôle with honor. The punishments formerly invented by the Company of Jesus, which were calculated to have as terrifying an effect morally as physically, were retained in their entirety. Letters to parents were obligatory on certain days, as well as confession. Thus our sins and sentiments were produced at stated periods. Everything bore the stamp of monastic uniformity. I remember, among other traces of the old régime, the inspection we underwent every Sunday. We stood in rows like soldiers, dressed in our best clothes, awaiting the two principals, who, attended by contractors and masters, examined us as to the three points, costume, health, and morals.

The two or three hundred pupils whom the college could accommodate were divided, according to the ancient custom, into four sections, called the *minimes*, the *petits*, the *moyens*, and the *grands*.\* The *minimes* section included the classes known as the eighth and seventh; the *petits*, the sixth, fifth, and fourth; the *moyens*, the third and second; and, lastly, the *grands* included the classes in rhetoric, philosophy, higher mathematics, physics, and chemistry. Each of these special sections had its own building, its classrooms, and its playground in a large tract used in common, upon which the classrooms opened, and at the other end of which was the refectory. That refectory, worthy of one of the old religious orders, was large enough to hold all the pupils. Contrary to the rule adopted in other

\* The *smallest*, the *small*, the *medium*, and the *large*.

educational institutions, we could talk while eating, an instance of Oratorian indulgence which enabled us to exchange dishes according to our tastes. That gastronomic traffic was always one of the keenest enjoyments of our school-life. If some *moyen*, whose seat was at the head of his table, preferred beans to his dessert,—for we had dessert,—the following offer would pass from mouth to mouth: “A portion of dessert for some beans!” until some gourmand accepted it; thereupon he would send up his portion of beans, which would go from hand to hand to the vendor, whose dessert would return by the same road. There was never a mistake. If several requests were made together, each had its number, and we would say: “First beans for first dessert.” The tables were long, and our perpetual bargaining kept everything in motion; and we talked and ate and behaved with unparalleled vivacity. Thus the chatter of three hundred young men, the going and coming of servants engaged in changing the plates, bringing in the courses, passing the bread, together with the inspection by the managers, made the refectory at Vendôme a spectacle unique in its way, and one which always surprised visitors.

To lighten the monotony of our lives, deprived as we were of all communication with the outside world and weaned from the caresses of our dear ones, the Fathers allowed us to have pigeons and gardens. Our two or three hundred bird-houses, a thousand or more pigeons with their nests on our high wall, and some thirty little gardens, made an even more

curious spectacle than that of our meals. But it would be too tedious to describe all the peculiarities which made the college of Vendôme an establishment *sui generis* and fertile in memories to those whose childhood was passed there. Which one of us does not remember with delight to this day the frolics of that cloistral life, despite the bitternesses of learning? There were the sweetmeats purchased contrary to law during our walks, the permission to play at cards and to give theatrical performances during our vacations,—marauding and privileges necessitated by our solitude; then there was our military band, the last vestige of the cadets; an academy, our chaplain, the Fathers who taught us; and the games specially forbidden or allowed: our cavalry on stilts, the long slides we made in winter, the clatter of our Gallic goloshes, and, above all, the trading introduced by the shop set up in the centre of our playground. This shop was kept by a sort of Master Jacques from whom great and small alike could order, according to the prospectus, boxes, stilts, tools, ruffed pigeons, feather-footed pigeons, mass-books,—an article seldom sold,—knives, paper, pens, pencils, ink of all colors, balls, marbles,—in short, the whole list of fascinating boyish treasures, from the sauce for the pigeons we had to kill to the jars in which we kept part of the rice we had for supper until breakfast on the following day. Which of us is so unfortunate as to have forgotten how his heart beat at the sight of that emporium, regularly thrown open during the Sunday recreation-hour, whither we



repaired in turn to spend such sums as we might possess, and where the modesty of the allowance for pin-money made by our parents required us to choose among all the objects which exerted such intense fascination over our minds? Did a young wife, to whom her husband gives twelve times a year a purse of gold, upon which to draw for her charming caprices, ever dream, during the first days of the honeymoon, of so many different purchases, each one of which would absorb the whole sum, as we used to meditate on the eve of the first Sunday in the month? During one whole night, we possessed, for six francs, all the treasures of that inexhaustible shop! and during mass we did not chant a single response which did not confuse our secret calculations. Which of us can remember that he ever had as much as two sous to spend on the second Sunday? And, finally, which of us failed to obey in anticipation the laws of society by pitying, assisting, despising the pariahs whom the avarice or poverty of their kindred left without money?

Whoever will try to conceive the isolation of that great college, with its monastic buildings, in the centre of a small town, and the four pens in which we were quartered according to grade, will certainly be able to understand the interest we all took in the arrival of a *new boy*, a new passenger arrived on shipboard. Never was a young duchess on her presentation at court so mercilessly criticised as was the new arrival by all the boys in his section. Ordinarily, during the evening recreation, before prayers,

the sycophants who were in the habit of talking with that one of the two Fathers who had charge of us for a week, turn and turn about, who happened to be on duty, would be the first to hear the authentic statement: "You will have a new boy to-morrow!" Instantly the cry: "A new boy! a new boy!" would echo through the playground. We would all run and form a group around the regent, and assail him with a flood of questions: "Where does he come from? What's his name? What class will he be in?" etc.

Louis Lambert's arrival was the text for a fairy-tale worthy of the *Thousand and One Nights*. I was then in the fourth class among the *petits*. We had for regents two men to whom we gave the traditional name of Fathers, although they were laymen. In my time, there were, at Vendôme, only three genuine Oratorians to whom that title legitimately belonged; in 1814, they left the college, which had insensibly become secularized, to take refuge beside the altar in some country curacy, after the example of the curé of Mer. Father Haugoult, the regent for the week, was a good man, but without profound knowledge; he lacked the tact which is so essential in discerning the characters of different children and measuring their punishments according to their strength. Father Haugoult then began very obligingly to tell us of the extraordinary event to which we were to be indebted on the following day for the arrival of the most extraordinary of new boys. At once our games ceased. All the *petits* formed a silent group to listen to the experience of this Louis



Lambert, whom Madame de Staël had found, like a meteoric stone, on the edge of a wood. Monsieur Haugoult had to tell us about Madame de Staël : that evening I thought of her as ten feet tall ; afterward I saw the picture of *Corinne* in which she is represented by Gérard as so tall and so lovely ; alas ! the ideal woman dreamed of by my imagination so far surpassed her, that the real Madame de Staël constantly lost ground in my mind, even after reading the exceedingly strong book entitled *De l'Allemagne*. But Lambert was at that time a much greater marvel ; after examining him, Monsieur Mareschal, the director of studies, hesitated, so Father Haugoult told us, about putting him in the section of the *grands*. Louis's weakness in Latin had caused him to be relegated to the fourth class, but he would undoubtedly jump one class each year ; an exception was to be made in his favor, and he was to be admitted to the academy. *Proh pudor !* we were to be honored by having in the ranks of the *petits* a coat decorated with the ribbon worn by the academicians of Vendôme. Signal privileges were granted the academicians ; they often dined at the principal's table, and held two literary meetings a year, which we attended to listen to their productions. An academician was a small great man. If any Vendômiian chooses to speak frankly, he will admit that, later in life, a genuine Academician of the genuine Académie Française seemed to him a much less amazing spectacle than the gigantic child made illustrious by the cross and the awe-inspiring ribbon, the insignia

of our academy. It was very difficult to gain admission to that glorious body before reaching the second class, for the academicians held public sessions every Thursday during vacation, and read us tales in prose and verse, letters, treatises, tragedies, comedies—compositions above the intelligence of the lower classes. I have always remembered one tale, entitled *The Green Ass*, which, I believe, was the most eminent production of that unknown academy.—A fourth-class boy to belong to the academy! That child of fourteen was to be among us, a poet already, loved by Madame de Staël, a future genius, so Father Haugoult said; a sorcerer, a fellow capable of writing a theme or making a translation while we were being called to the classroom, and of learning his lessons by reading them over twice. Louis Lambert upset all our ideas. And Father Haugoult's curiosity, the impatience that he manifested to see the new boy, fanned still higher the flame of our imaginations.

"If he has pigeons, he can't have any house for them. There's no more room. So much the worse!" said one of us, who afterward became a great agriculturist.

"Whom will he sit next to?" queried another.

"Oh! how I'd like to be his *faisant*!" cried an excitable youth.

In our school jargon, the word *faisant*—elsewhere the term is *copain* \*—constituted an idiom difficult to translate. It expressed a paternal division of the

\* Chum.

joys and sorrows of our boy-life, a community of interest fertile in quarrels and reconciliations, an offensive and defensive treaty of alliance. Strangely enough, I never in my life knew two brothers to be chums. If man lives only by sentiment, perhaps he thinks that it would impoverish his existence to confound acquired with natural affection.

The impression made upon me that evening by Father Haugoult's remark was one of the most profound impressions of my childhood, and I can compare it to nothing but the reading of *Robinson Crusoe*. Indeed, later in life, I owed to the memory of that extraordinary sensation an observation that may be new to some as to the varying effects which words produce upon different minds. There is nothing absolute in language: we act upon the word more than it acts upon us; its strength is proportioned to the images we have acquired and which we group about it; but the study of that phenomenon requires extended developments, out of place here. Being unable to sleep, I held a long conversation with my neighbor in the dormitory concerning the extraordinary mortal we were to have among us on the morrow. That neighbor, recently an officer, now a writer of exalted philosophical views, Barchou de Penhoën, belied neither his predestination, nor the chance which brought us together in the same class, on the same bench, under the same roof, the only two pupils of Vendôme whose names Vendôme hears to-day; for when this book was first published, our schoolmate Dufaure had not yet entered public and

parliamentary life. The recent translator of Fichte, the interpreter and friend of Ballanche, was already interested, as I was myself, in metaphysical questions; he often argued with me about God and ourselves and nature. He was at that time making pretensions to pyrrhonism. In his anxiety to support his rôle, he denied Lambert's faculties; whereas I, having recently read *Les Enfants Célèbres*, overwhelmed him with proofs, citing little Montcalm, Pic de la Mirandole, Pascal,—in a word, all the known instances of precocious brain-power; anomalies famous in the history of the human mind, and predecessors of Lambert.

At that time, I was passionately fond of reading. As my father earnestly desired to have me enter the Ecole Polytechnique, he paid for private lessons in mathematics for me. My tutor, who was the college librarian, allowed me to take books without looking carefully to see what volumes I carried away from the library, a tranquil spot, where he used to give me my lessons during recreation-hours. I think that he either did not know much or was deeply engrossed by some important undertaking, for he gladly allowed me to read during the lessons, while he worked himself at I know not what. Thus, by virtue of a compact tacitly entered into between us, I did not complain of learning nothing, and he kept silent as to my borrowings of books. Carried away by that unseasonable passion, I neglected my studies to compose poems, which certainly were not calculated to arouse great hopes, if I am to judge

them by this overlong line which became famous among my comrades, and which was the beginning of an epic on the Incas:

“O Inca! O roi infortuné et malheureux!”\*

I was called *the poet* in derision of my attempts, but raillery did not reform me. I rhymed all the time, despite the judicious advice of Monsieur Mareschal, our principal, who tried to cure me of a disease that, unfortunately, was inveterate, by telling me, by way of apologue, the misfortunes of a linnet that fell from its nest because it tried to fly before its wings had grown. I continued my reading, I became the least studious, the laziest, the dreamiest pupil in the section of the *petits*, and, consequently, the most frequently punished. This autobiographical digression should make clear the nature of the reflections which assailed me on Lambert's arrival. I was at that time twelve years of age. I felt, first of all, a vague sympathy for a child whose temperament was in some respects similar to mine. I was to meet a companion in reverie and meditation. Although I did not as yet know what glory was, it seemed a glorious thing to me to be the companion of a child whose immortal genius was extolled by Madame de Staël. Louis Lambert seemed a giant to me.

The morrow so eagerly anticipated arrived at last. A few moments before breakfast we heard the double step of Monsieur Mareschal and the new boy in the

\*O Inca! O unfortunate and unhappy king!

silent yard. All faces were at once turned toward the door of the classroom. Father Haugoult, who shared with us the torture of curiosity, did not make the hissing sound with which he was accustomed to impose silence on our whispering and recall us to our work. Another moment and we saw the famous new boy, whom Monsieur Mareschal held by the hand. The regent stepped down from his desk and the principal said to him, with due solemnity, in accordance with the etiquette of the school:

“Monsieur, I bring you Monsieur Louis Lambert; you will put him in the fourth class and he will begin his studies to-morrow.”

Then, after talking in an undertone with the regent, he said aloud:

“Where will you put him?”

It would have been unjust to disturb one of us for the new boy; and as there was but one desk unoccupied, Louis Lambert took possession of it; it was next to mine, I having been the last to enter the class. Although we still had some time to remain at our studies, we all stood up to examine Lambert. Monsieur Mareschal heard our whispering, saw that we were disregarding all rules, and said, with the kindness that made him particularly dear to us:

“Be quiet, at least, and do not disturb the other classes.”

Those words meant that our recreation-hour had begun some time before the hour for breakfast, and we all surrounded Lambert while Monsieur Mareschal walked up and down the courtyard with



Father Haugoult. There were about eighty of us little devils, as bold as birds of prey. Although we had all passed through that cruel novitiate, we never spared a new-comer the mocking laughter, the questions, the impertinences that succeeded one another on such occasions, to the great shame of the neophyte, whose manners and strength of character were thus put to the test. Lambert, whether because he was perfectly calm or because he was completely abashed, answered none of our questions. Thereupon one of us said that he must have graduated from the school of Pythagoras. A general laugh greeted this sally. The new-comer was dubbed Pythagoras for his whole college life. However, Lambert's piercing glance, the disdain depicted on his face for our child's-play, so entirely out of tune with the nature of his mind, his unembarrassed manner, his strength which was apparently proportioned to his years, impressed a certain amount of respect on the most mischievous among us. As for myself, I stood close beside him, scrutinizing him silently.

Louis was a thin, slender boy, about four feet and six inches tall; his sunburned face and hands gave him an appearance of great muscular strength, which, as a matter of fact, he did not possess. So it was that, two months after he came to the college, when the long hours in the classroom had caused his complexion to lose its almost earthy hue, we found that he became as pale and white as a woman. His head was remarkably large. His hair, which was a



beautiful glossy black, with thick curls, imparted an indescribable charm to his brow, which was of extraordinary dimensions even to our boyish perception, and we, as you will readily believe, were quite indifferent to the prognostics of phrenology, a science then in its infancy. The beauty of his prophetic brow was due particularly to the extremely graceful shape of the two arches beneath which gleamed his black eyes, and which seemed to have been carved from alabaster; the lines, as very rarely happens, being absolutely parallel where they joined above the nose. But it was difficult to think of his face, which was quite irregular in its details, when you looked at his eyes, whose glance possessed a wonderful variety of expression and which seemed to be lined with a soul. Sometimes as clear as crystal and extraordinarily penetrating, sometimes of a celestial softness, that glance became dull, colorless, so to speak, when he abandoned himself to contemplation. His eye at such times resembled a pane of glass which the sun has suddenly left after shining brightly upon it. It was with his strength and voice as with his glance: the same immobility, the same capricious variations. Sometimes his voice became as soft as a woman's voice when it whispers an avowal; sometimes, again, it was painful to hear, untrue, rough, if we may use these words to describe novel effects. As for his strength, he was usually unable to endure the fatigue of any sort of game, and seemed to be weakly, almost infirm. But, during the early days of his novitiate, one of

our matadors having sneered at that sickly delicacy which unfitted him for the violent exercises in vogue at the college, Lambert seized with both hands one end of one of our tables, which had twelve large desks set into it in two rows meeting in the middle; he braced himself against the regent's desk, and held the table with his feet, which he placed on the lower crossbar.

"Now, let any ten of you try to move it!" he said.

I was present, and I can bear witness to that remarkable manifestation of strength, for it was impossible to wrest the table from him. Lambert possessed the gift of summoning extraordinary powers at certain moments, and of concentrating his strength upon a given point for a special purpose. But we children, being accustomed, like men, to judge everything according to our first impressions, studied Louis only during the days immediately following his arrival; at that time, he completely failed to realize Madame de Staël's prophecies, performing none of the prodigies which we expected from him.

After three months' trial, Louis was considered a very ordinary scholar. I alone was privileged to penetrate that sublime, why should I not say divine, mind; for what is nearer to God than genius in the breast of a child? The similarity of our tastes and our thoughts made us friends and chums. Our fraternal relations became so pronounced that our comrades coupled our names; one was never mentioned without the other; and if they wished to call one of

us, they would shout: "The-Poet-and-Pythagoras!" Other names similarly joined indicated like intimacies. Thus I remained for two years poor Louis Lambert's college friend; and my life during that period was so closely united with his that it is possible for me to-day to write his intellectual history.

For a long time I knew nothing of the poesy and treasures of thought concealed in my comrade's heart and behind his forehead. It was necessary that I should reach the age of thirty, that my observations should be matured and condensed, that they should be illumined anew by a stream of brilliant light before I could realize the scope and bearing of the phenomena of which I was at the time an unenlightened witness; I enjoyed them without understanding their grandeur or their mechanism; indeed, I forgot some of them, and remembered only the most striking; but to-day my memory has arranged them according to their significance and importance, and I have familiarized myself with the secrets of that teeming brain, carrying my mind back to the delightful days of our youthful friendship. Time alone enabled me to fathom the meaning of the acts and events which abounded in that unknown life, as in the lives of so many other men lost to science. So it is that this history is, in respect to the expression and appreciation of things, full of anachronisms purely mental, which, perhaps, will not detract from its peculiar interest.

During the early months of his stay at Vendôme, Louis Lambert suffered from a disease whose symptoms were indiscernible to the eyes of our superiors, and which necessarily impeded the exercise of his lofty faculties. Accustomed to the fresh air, to the independence of an education governed by chance, encompassed by the loving care of an old man who doted on him, habituated to think in the bright sunshine, it was very hard for him to adapt himself to the regulations of the college, to march in line, to live within the four walls of a room where eighty silent boys were seated on wooden benches, each in front of his desk. His senses were so perfectly adjusted that they were endowed with an exquisite delicacy, and everything about him suffered by reason of that life in common. The exhalations by which the air was poisoned, mingled with the odor of a classroom that was always dirty and littered with the remnants of our breakfasts or luncheons, affected his sense of smell, which sense, being more directly connected than the others with the cerebral system, any shock to it is likely to cause an imperceptible disturbance of the organs of thought. In addition to these causes of atmospheric corruption, there were in our study-rooms closets in which we kept all our booty, pigeons killed for fête-days, or food taken from the refectory. Lastly, our room also contained a huge stone on

which there were always two pails filled with water, a sort of watering-trough to which we went in turn every morning to wash our faces and hands in the master's presence. From there we went to a table where women were waiting to comb our hair and powder us. As our room was cleaned only once a day, before we were out of bed, it was always dirty. Furthermore, notwithstanding the large number of windows and the height of the door, the air was necessarily contaminated by the emanations from the lavatory, by the hair-combing, by the contents of the closets, by the innumerable occupations of the pupils, to say nothing of our eighty bodies crowded together there. That species of collegiate *humus*, constantly mingled with the mud we brought in from the yards, formed a dungheap of which the stench was unendurable.

The deprivation of the pure and fragrant air of the fields in which he had hitherto lived, the change in his habits, his discipline, everything tended to depress Lambert. With his head always resting on his left hand, and his elbow on the desk, he passed the hours of study watching the foliage in the yard or the clouds trailing in the skies; he seemed to be studying his lessons; but the regent, seeing that his pen was motionless or his paper still white, would call to him:

“You are doing nothing, Lambert!”

That “You are doing nothing, Lambert,” was a pin-prick which wounded Louis to the heart. Then he knew nothing of the leisure of the recreation-hour

because he had *pensums* to write. The pensum, a punishment which varies in form according to the customs of each college, consisted at Vendôme in copying a certain number of lines during recreation-hours. Lambert and I were so overwhelmed with pensums that we did not have six days of liberty during our two years of friendship. Had it not been for the books which we took from the library, and which kept our brains alive, that sort of existence would have ended in deadening our faculties completely. Lack of exercise is fatal to children. The habit of luxurious living, adopted early in life, sensibly impairs, it is said, the constitution of royal personages when they do not offset the vices of their destiny by the rough life of the battle-field or by the exercise in hunting. If the laws of etiquette and of courts affect the spinal marrow to the point of feminizing the pelvis of kings, of relaxing their cerebral fibres and thus vitiating the race, what profound lesions, moral or physical, must be produced in schoolboys by constant deprivation of air and exercise and merriment! The penitentiary régime in vogue in our colleges will demand the attention of those in charge of public education when there happens to be among them some thinker who does not think exclusively of himself.

We incurred the penalty of the pensum in innumerable ways. Our memories were so good that we never learned our lessons. It was enough for us to hear our comrades recite bits of French, Latin, or grammar, to be able to repeat them in our turn; but

if, unluckily, it occurred to the master to reverse the order and question us first, it frequently happened that we did not know what the lesson was; thereupon the pensum was visited upon us notwithstanding our most ingenious excuses. The difficulty was that we always waited until the last moment to do our duty. If we had a book to finish, if we were absorbed in reverie, the duty was forgotten: another source of pensums! How many times were our versions not written until the *first*, whose duty it was to collect them when we returned to the class, began to perform that duty!

To the mental difficulties which Lambert experienced in becoming acclimated in the college, was added an apprenticeship no less painful, through which we had all passed, the apprenticeship in bodily suffering, which varied indefinitely among us. The delicacy of the skin in children demands painstaking care, especially in winter, when, impelled by innumerable causes, they constantly exchange the frigid atmosphere of a muddy courtyard for the high temperature of the classroom. So that, in the absence of the maternal attentions which *petits* and *minimes* sorely missed, they suffered terribly from chilblains and chapped hands, so painful that they necessitated a special dressing during the breakfast-hour, but it was very inadequate on account of the great number of hands and feet and heels affected. Many children, indeed, were obliged to prefer the disease to the remedy: for they often had to choose between finishing their tasks, the pleasures of a



slide, and the removal of a bandage carelessly applied and more carelessly watched. Then, too, the customs of the college had made it fashionable to sneer at the poor weaklings who went to have their sores dressed, and he was the best man who could most quickly remove the rags that the hospital attendant had put on his hands. In winter, therefore, several of us, with fingers and toes half-dead, consumed with aches and pains, were little disposed to work because we were suffering, and were punished for not working. The Father was so often deceived by our fictitious sicknesses that he paid no heed to real ills. The pupils were clothed at the expense of the college, that item being included in the charge for board and tuition. The managers were accustomed to make a contract for the necessary supply of shoes and clothes; hence the weekly inspection which I have already mentioned. That method, excellent as it is for the manager, always has certain unpleasant results for the managed. Woe to the little fellow who contracted the bad habit of wearing his shoes down at the heel or splitting them, or using up the soles prematurely, whether by a defect in his gait or by whittling the edges during study-hours in obedience to the imperative need of action always present in children!

Throughout the winter, Lambert did not once go out to walk without intense suffering: in the first place, his chilblains immediately began to pain him, and the pain was as excruciating as a twinge of gout; then the buckles and strings intended to keep the

shoe in place would give way, or the heels would be so worn that the accursed shoe would not stay on the child's foot; he was compelled then to drag it painfully along the icy roads, where he had sometimes to dispute possession of it with the clayey soil of Vendômois; lastly, the water and snow often found their way in through an unnoticed hole, or a poorly sewn seam, and the foot would begin to swell. Out of sixty children, there were not ten who had not some trouble that made walking a torture to them; nevertheless, they all followed the main body, borne on by excitement, as men are borne on in life by the life about them. How often did some noble-hearted child weep with rage as he put forth the last remnant of his energy to go forward or to return to the fold despite his suffering! so intensely does the mind, still untried at that age, dread laughter and compassion, two varieties of mockery! At college, as in society, the strong despises the weak, without knowing wherein genuine strength consists. But that was nothing; we had no gloves on our hands. If, perchance, the parents, the hospital attendant, or the principal gave a pair to the most delicate of our number, the jokers and the big fellows in the class amused themselves by putting the gloves on the stove, scorching them, stealing them; and even if they escaped the marauders, they got wet and shrunk, for lack of care. Gloves were an impossibility. Gloves seemed to import privilege, and the boys chose to be all equal.

These different varieties of physical pain all had

their turn at Louis Lambert. Like all meditative men, who, in the tranquillity of their periods of reverie, contract the habit of some instinctive movement, he had a way of playing with his shoes, and destroyed them in a very short time. His woman's complexion, the skin on his ears, his lips, chapped at the slightest touch of cold. His soft, white hands became red and swollen. He took cold constantly. So that he was fairly enveloped in suffering until he had become accustomed to the Vendômois customs. Learning wisdom at last by his cruel experience of physical pain, he was driven to attend to his affairs, to use a school expression. He had to take care of his closet, his desk, his clothes, his shoes; to see that his ink was not stolen, or his books, or his note-books, or his pens,—in short, to think of the thousand and one details of our childish existence, which were so scrupulously attended to by those selfish, commonplace minds to whom the prizes for excellence or good conduct always fall, but were neglected by a child whose future was bright with promise, and who, under the yoke of an almost divine imagination, abandoned himself blissfully to the torrent of his thoughts.

Nor is this all. There is a continuous struggle between masters and pupils, a struggle without a truce, which can be compared to nothing in society unless, perhaps, the battle of the opposition against the ministry in a representative government. But the journalists and orators of the opposition are, perhaps, less prompt to take advantage of a favorable

opportunity, less stern in reproving wrong-doing, less bitter in their mockery, than children are toward those who are placed in charge of them. At that trade, the patience of the angels would be exhausted. We must not, therefore, be too hard upon a poor pedagogue, poorly paid and therefore far from judicious, for being sometimes unjust or losing his temper. Being constantly watched by mocking glances, encompassed by pitfalls, he sometimes takes his revenge for his own faults upon children who are only too prompt to observe them.

Except for serious offences, for which other punishments were provided, the ferule was the *ultima ratio Patrum* at Vendôme. For neglected duties, for lessons unlearned, for ordinary peccadilloes, the pensum was sufficient; but outraged self-esteem found utterance in the master through his ferule. Among the physical sufferings to which we were subjected, the keenest of all was beyond question that caused by that leather paddle, about two fingers thick, applied upon our feeble hands with all the regent's strength increased by all his wrath. To receive that classical chastisement the culprit knelt in the centre of the room. He must rise from his bench, walk to the desk, kneel beside it, and undergo the curious, often mocking, scrutiny of his comrades. To sensitive minds, therefore, these preparations were an additional punishment, like the journey which a condemned man used to take from the Palais de Justice to his scaffold on Place de la Grève. The behavior of the victims varied

according to their characters; some shrieked, and wept hot tears, before or after the ferule; others submitted to the pain with a stoical air; but the strongest could hardly restrain the convulsive working of their features while awaiting it.

Louis Lambert was overwhelmed with whippings, and he owed them to the exercise of a faculty of his nature, the existence of which was long unknown to him. When he was abruptly aroused from meditation by the regent's "You are doing nothing," it often happened, unconsciously at first, that he cast at the man a glance instinct with indefinable fierce contempt, charged with thought as a Leyden jar is charged with electricity. That expression doubtless caused a commotion in the breast of the master, who, being hurt by the silent epigram, determined to teach his pupil to abandon that withering glance. The first time that the Father took umbrage at that disdainful gleam, which struck him like a flash of lightning, he made this remark, which I have never forgotten:

"If you look at me again like that, Lambert, you will be feruled!"

At these words every nose went into the air, every eye was fixed alternately on the master and Louis. The threat was so idiotic that the child overwhelmed the Father with a glance which was a veritable lightning-flash. Thereupon ensued between the regent and Lambert a quarrel which resulted in a large number of ferulings. Thus was revealed the oppressive power of his eye.

This poor poet, with his nervous constitution, as

subject to the vapors as a woman, dominated by chronic melancholy, ill with his genius as a young girl is with the love which she invokes and of which she knows nothing; this child, so strong and so weak at once, plucked up by Corinne from his beautiful fields to be placed in the mould of a college where each intellect, each body, is expected, despite its scope, despite its temperament, to adapt itself to the rules and the uniform as the gold shapes itself into round pieces under the coiner's stamp,—this poor poet, Louis Lambert, suffered, therefore, at every point where pain can obtain a hold upon the mind and the flesh. Tied down to a bench within the bounds of his desk, stricken by the ferule, stricken by disease, affected in all his senses, pinched by a girdle of woes, everything constrained him to abandon his outer man to the innumerable tyrannies of the college. Like the martyrs who smiled amid their sufferings, he took refuge in the heaven which his thoughts opened to him. Perhaps that wholly inward life was instrumental in disclosing to him the mysteries in which he had so much faith.

Our independence, our illicit occupations, our apparent indolence, the benumbed state in which we passed our days, our constant punishments, our repugnance for our duties and our pensums, procured for us the unquestioned reputation of worthless, incorrigible children. Our masters despised us, and we were in equally bad odor with our schoolmates, from whom we concealed our contraband studies for fear of their ridicule. This twofold disesteem, which was most



unjust on the part of the Fathers, was a perfectly natural feeling on our comrades' part. We did not know how to play ball, or to run, or to walk on stilts. On days when we were not punished, or when by any chance we obtained a moment's liberty, we took part in none of the amusements in favor in the college. Strangers to the pleasures of our fellow-pupils, we remained alone, sitting with melancholy mien under a tree on the playground. The-Poet-and-Pythagoras were, therefore, an anomaly, their life was lived apart from the common life of the college. The keen instinct, the sensitive self-esteem which are so marked in schoolboys, caused them to feel that our minds were either on a higher or on a lower level than theirs. Hence, in some of them, hatred of our aristocratic silence, in others contempt for our uselessness. These sentiments were not then appreciated by us; I did not fully comprehend them until very recently. Thus we lived exactly like rats hidden in that corner of the room in which our desks were, detained there during the hours of recreation as well as during those of study. That abnormal situation was certain to bring us, and did, in fact, bring us, into a state of war with the boys of our section. We were almost always forgotten, and remained there quietly, half-happy, like two plants, like two ornaments which had become essential to the harmonious appearance of the room. But sometimes the most annoying of our comrades insulted us in order to manifest their strength in an abusive way, and we replied with a contemptuous manner which



often caused the Poet-and-Pythagoras to be well beaten.

Lambert's homesickness lasted several months. I know no words which will describe his melancholy. Louis spoiled many masterpieces for me. Having both of us played the part of the *Leper of the Valley of Aosta*, we had experienced the sensations described in Monsieur de Maistre's book, before reading them as translated by that eloquent pen. Now, a work may recall memories of childhood, but it will never contend against them with advantage. Lambert's sighs taught me hymns of sadness vastly more penetrating than the finest pages of *Werther*. But it may be equally true that there is no comparison between the suffering caused by a passion reprobated, whether rightfully or wrongfully, by our laws, and the sorrows of a poor child longing for the splendor of the sunlight, the dew of the valleys, and liberty. Werther was the slave of a desire, Louis Lambert's whole soul was enslaved. In the case of equal talents, the sentiment that is most touching or founded upon the truest, because the purest, desires, is certain to surpass the lamentations of genius. After sitting for a long while gazing contemplatively at the foliage of one of the lindens in the playground, Louis would say but a single word to me, but that word indicated a reverie of immense scope.

"Luckily for me," he cried one day, "I have some happy moments when it seems to me that the walls of the classroom have fallen and that I am somewhere else, out in the fields! What a delight

to let one's self float on the current of one's thought as a bird follows the impetus of its flight!—Why is the color green so lavishly used in nature?" he asked me. "Why are there so few straight lines in nature? Why does man in his works so rarely employ curves? Why has man alone the consciousness of the straight line?"

These words indicated a long journey through space. Certainly he had seen vast landscapes or breathed the perfume of forests. He was always silent, always resigned, a living, sublime elegy; always suffering, but unable to say: "I am suffering!" That eagle, who craved the whole world for his pasture, was confined between four narrow, dirty walls; thus his life became, in the broadest acceptance of the term, an ideal life. Full of contempt for the almost useless studies to which we were condemned, Louis followed his aerial road, completely severed from the objects that surrounded us. Obeying the necessity of imitating somebody, which is predominant in children, I tried to adapt my existence to his. Louis inspired in me the more readily his passion for the species of slumber in which profound contemplation plunges the body, because I was younger and more impressionable. We accustomed ourselves, like lovers, to think together, to impart our meditations to each other. His intuitive sensations already had that supernatural keenness which is characteristic of the intellectual perceptions of the great poets, and often brings them near to madness.

"Do you feel, as I do, imaginary pains inflicted

on you, in spite of yourself?" he asked me one day. "For instance, if I think intently of the effect the blade of my penknife would produce in entering my flesh, I suddenly feel a sharp pain, as if I had really cut myself; only the blood is missing. But that sensation comes upon me and surprises me like a sudden noise breaking a profound silence. An idea cause physical pain!—Come, what do you say to that?"

When he indulged in such subtle reflections, we both fell into an artless reverie. We set about discovering within ourselves the indescribable phenomena relative to the generation of thought, which Lambert hoped to grasp in its most minute developments, in order to be able to describe some day the unknown mechanism. Then, after discussions often mingled with childish nonsense, a gleam would flash from Lambert's flaming eyes, he would press my hand, and there would come from his mind a sentence by which he would try to sum up his reflections.

"To think is to see," he said to me one day, excited by one of our discussions concerning the foundation of our organization. "All human knowledge rests on deduction, which is a gradual vision by which we descend from cause to effect, by which we ascend from effect to cause; or to use a broader expression, all poetry, as well as every work of art, proceeds from a rapid vision of things."

He was a spiritualist; but I ventured to contradict him, arming myself with his own observations to

consider the intellect as a purely physical product. We were both right. It may be that the two words materialism and spiritualism express two sides of a single fact. His studies on the substance of thought caused him to accept with a sort of pride the life of privations to which our indolence and our disdainful disregard of our duties condemned us. He had a certain consciousness of his own worth which sustained him in his intellectual labors. With what a delicious sensation did I feel his mind reacting on mine! How many times we remained on our bench, both busily engaged in reading a book, each forgetting the other, although still side by side; but each knowing that the other was there, plunged in an ocean of ideas, like fish swimming in the same waters! Thus our life was wholly vegetative in appearance, but we existed through the heart and the brain. Feelings, thoughts, were the only events of our school-life.

Lambert exercised an influence over my imagination which I can feel to this day. I listened eagerly to his stories, all marked by that touch of the marvellous which causes grown men as well as children to devour with delight tales in which the true assumes the most absurd shapes. His passion for mystery, and the natural credulity of children, led us to speak frequently of Heaven and Hell. At such times, Louis tried, by interpreting Swedenborg to me, to make me share his beliefs relative to the angels. Even his most fallacious arguments contained surprisingly acute observations concerning the power of

man, which imparted to his words that complexion of truth without which nothing is possible in any art. The romantic end of man's destiny, as he described it, was well calculated to encourage the inclination which leads untried imaginations to abandon themselves to religious beliefs. It is during their youth that nations give birth to their dogmas, their idols. And the supernatural beings before whom they tremble—what are they but the personification of their feelings, of their cravings in a magnified form? What my memory still retains of the poetic conversations which Lambert and myself had concerning the Swedish Prophet, whose works I have since read from curiosity, may be reduced to this summary:

There are supposed to be two distinct creatures in each of us. According to Swedenborg, the angel is the individual in whom the inward being succeeds in triumphing over the outward being. If a man wishes to follow his calling of angel, he must, as soon as his mind makes clear to him his twofold existence, exert himself to nourish the exquisite angelic nature which is in him. If, because he has not a clear view of his destiny, he allows bodily action to predominate instead of sustaining his intellectual life, all his strength is expended in the play of his external passions, and the angel slowly perishes by virtue of this materialization of the two natures. In the contrary case, if he sustains his inward being with the essences it requires, the soul triumphs over the body and tries to detach itself from it. When their

separation comes in the shape which we call death, the angel, being sufficiently powerful to free himself from his envelope, remains and begins his real life. The infinite individualities which differentiate men can be explained in no other way than by this double existence; they demonstrate it, and make it possible to understand. In truth, the distance that exists between a man whose inert intelligence condemns him to apparent stupidity, and him whom the use of his inward vision has endowed with force of some sort, must lead us to the conclusion that there may be between men of genius and other men the same distance that separates the blind from those who see. This thought, which extends creation indefinitely, affords in some sort the key to heaven. Although in appearance inextricably confounded here on earth, men are really segregated, according to the perfection of their *inward being*, in distinct spheres of which the language and the manners are entirely different. In the invisible as in the real world, if some dweller in the lower regions arrives, before he is worthy, in a higher circle, not only does he not understand the customs or the speech which he finds there, but his presence paralyzes both voices and hearts. Dante, in his *Divina Commedia*, may have had some slight intuition of these spheres which begin in the world of sorrows, and ascend one upon another into heaven. The doctrine of Swedenborg, then, was the work of a clear mind which had recorded the innumerable phenomena by which the angels manifest themselves among men.



This doctrine, which I am endeavoring to summarize to-day with some attention to the logical sequence of its parts, was laid before me by Lambert with all the seductiveness of mystery, enveloped in the swaddling-clothes of the peculiar phraseology of the mystics: obscure diction overflowing with abstractions, and exerting such active influence on the brain that there are certain books of Jacob Bøhm, Swedenborg, and Madame Guyon whose absorbing periods evoke caprices of the imagination as diverse and multiform as the dreams produced by opium can be. Lambert told me mysterious facts so extraordinary in their nature, he impressed my imagination so vividly, that he made my head swim. Nevertheless, I loved to plunge into that mysterious world, invisible to the senses, wherein everyone takes pleasure in living, whether he pictures it to himself under the indefinite form of the future, or clothes it with the potent forms of fable. These violent reactions of the mind upon itself, taught me unwittingly to realize its power, and accustomed me to the labors of thought.

As for Lambert, he explained everything by his theory concerning the angels. In his eyes, pure love, love as we dream of it in our boyhood, is the contact of two angelic natures. So that nothing could exceed the ardor of his longing to meet an angel-woman. Ah! who was better adapted than he to inspire, to feel love? If anything could convey the idea of exquisite sensibility, it was the kindly and lovable nature manifested in his sentiments, in



his words, in his acts and his slightest motions—in the conjugal affection which bound us together, and which we expressed by calling ourselves *faisants*. There was no distinction between the things that came from him and those that came from me. Each of us learned to counterfeit the other's handwriting, so that one might perform alone the duties of both. When one of us had a book to finish which must be returned to my tutor in mathematics, he could read it without interruption, for the other would write his lesson and his pensum for him. We discharged our duties as a tax levied upon our tranquillity. If my memory serves me, they were often remarkably well done when Lambert was responsible for them. But as we were both taken for idiots, the professors always analyzed our productions under the influence of a fatal prejudice, and even preserved them to amuse our fellow-pupils. I remember one evening, at the close of the recitation that lasted from two until four, the master seized upon a translation by Lambert. The passage began: *Caius Gracchus vir nobilis*. Louis had translated the words by *Caius Gracchus was a noble heart*.

"Where do you find anything about heart in *nobilis*?" demanded the professor, suddenly.

And the whole class laughed, while Lambert gazed at the professor with a dazed expression.

"What would Madame la Baronne de Staël say if she heard that you mistranslated the word which means of noble birth, of patrician origin?"

"She would say that you were an old fool!" I exclaimed under my breath.

“Monsieur le poëte, you will be confined to your room for a week,” retorted the professor, who unluckily overheard me.

Lambert softly rejoined, with an inexpressibly affectionate glance at me:

“*Vir nobilis!*”

Madame de Staël was partly responsible for Lambert's misfortunes. On every occasion, masters and disciples hurled that name at his head, sometimes ironically, sometimes as a reproach. Louis lost no time in getting himself sentenced to imprisonment to keep me company. There we were freer than elsewhere, we could talk whole days at a time in the silent dormitory, where each pupil possessed a niche six feet square, the partitions being of bars only at the top, and the grated doors being locked every evening and opened every morning under the eye of the Father whose duty it was to be present at our rising and retiring. The click of those doors, handled with extraordinary celerity by the dormitory boys, was another of the peculiar features of that college. These alcoves were our places of confinement, and sometimes we were shut up there for months at a time. Pupils under sentence of imprisonment fell under the stern eye of the prefect, a sort of censor who came, in his hours of leisure, or unexpectedly, walking very softly, to find out whether we were talking instead of doing our penums. But the walnut-shells strewn on the stairways, and our sharp ears, almost always enabled us to anticipate his arrival, and we could apply ourselves calmly

to our dear lessons. As we were forbidden to read, our hours in prison were usually given over to metaphysical discussions, or to the narration of some curious incidents connected with the phenomena of thought.

One of the most extraordinary of these incidents is the one I propose to relate, not only because it concerns Lambert, but also because it was, perhaps, the thing that determined his scientific career. According to the ordinary rule in French colleges, Sunday and Thursday were the days when we were allowed to leave the premises; but the services, which we attended with great regularity, occupied so nearly the whole of Sunday that we looked upon Thursday as our only holiday. When mass was said, we had sufficient time to take long walks in the open country in the neighborhood of Vendôme. The manor of Rochambeau was the favorite goal of our excursions, perhaps, because of its distance. The *petits* rarely took such a tiresome walk; once or twice a year, however, the regents proposed the Rochambeau trip as a reward of merit. In 1812, late in the spring, we were to go there for the first time. The longing to see the famous château of Rochambeau, whose owner sometimes gave milk to the boys, made us all behave ourselves. So nothing happened to prevent the excursion. Neither Lambert nor myself was familiar with the pretty valley of the Loir, where the château was situated. So that both he and I were intensely preoccupied on the day preceding the walk, which caused a traditional

feeling of joy throughout the college. We talked about it all the evening, agreeing to expend in fruit or in milk such money as we possessed, contrary to the Vendômois laws. The next day, after dinner, about half-past twelve, we set out, all provided with a cubical piece of bread which was distributed to us for our lunch. Then, active as swallows, we marched away in a large group, toward the celebrated castle, with an ardor which prevented us from being conscious of fatigue at first. When we reached the hill from which we could see the château on the hillside, and the winding valley where the river flows like a serpent through a gracefully sloping meadow,—an admirable landscape, one of those whereon the vivid sensations of youth or those of love stamp so many charms which one must never hope to discover again,—Louis Lambert said to me:

“Why, I saw this in a dream last night!”

He recognized not only the clump of trees beneath which we were, but the arrangement of the foliage, the color of the waters, the turrets of the château, the inequalities of the ground, the distant view,—in a word, all the details of a landscape which he then saw for the first time. We were both mere children; I, at all events, for I was only thirteen, whereas Louis at fifteen seemed to possess the profound intelligence of a man of genius; but, at that time, we were both incapable of falsehood in the most trivial incidents of our friendship. Moreover, although Lambert, by virtue of the vast power of his thought, had some prevision of the importance of

facts, he was far from appreciating at once their full bearing; so he began by being astonished at this fact which I have related. I asked him if he had not been at Rochambeau in his childhood; my question impressed him; but, after searching his memory, he answered in the negative. This incident, the counterpart of which may be found in the phenomena of the sleep of many men, will enable the reader to understand the first manifestations of Lambert's talents; indeed, he was able to deduce a whole system from it, by seizing upon a fragment of thought upon which to reconstruct an entire creation, as Cuvier did in another direction.

At that moment, we were both sitting under an old oak; after a few moments of reflection, Louis said to me:

"If the landscape did not come to me, which would be absurd to suppose, I must have gone to it. If I were here while I was asleep in my alcove, does not that fact establish a complete separation between my body and my inward being? Does it not prove some indefinable power of locomotion in the mind, or effects similar to those of locomotion of the body? Now, if my mind and my body can be severed during sleep, why should I not be able to divorce them in my waking hours as well? I can see no mean between these two propositions. But let us go further, let us examine the details! Either these phenomena are accomplished by the power of a faculty which sets in motion a second being to which my body serves as envelope, since I was in my alcove all the

time and still saw this landscape—and that explanation overturns many theories; or else these phenomena were accomplished in some nerve-centre whose name is yet to be learned, where the sentiments take their rise, or in the cerebral centre where ideas are born. This last hypothesis raises strange questions. I have walked, I have seen, I have heard. Motion cannot be conceived without space, sound acts only in angles or on surfaces, and color is produced by light alone. If, during the night and with my eyes closed, I have seen colored objects inwardly, if I have heard noises in the most profound silence and without the conditions essential for the production of sound, if in the most absolute immobility I have moved from place to place, we must assume internal faculties independent of external physical laws. Material nature must be penetrable by the spirit. How is it that men have reflected so little hitherto upon the phenomena of sleep which denote a twofold life in man? May there not be a new science in those phenomena?" he added, striking his forehead a violent blow; "even if they be not the foundation of a new science, they certainly indicate immense powers in man; at least, they point to the frequent severance of our two natures, a fact about which I have been hovering so long. At last I have evidence of the superiority which distinguishes our latent senses from our visible senses! *homo duplex*!—But," he continued, after a pause, and with a gesture of doubt, "perhaps there are not two natures within us. Perhaps we are simply



endowed with hidden, perfectible powers whose exercise, whose developments produce in us phenomena of activity, of penetration, of vision, as yet unexplained. In our love of the marvellous, a passion engendered by our pride, we have transformed these results into poetic creations, because we failed to understand them. It is so convenient to deify the incomprehensible! Ah! I confess that I shall weep for the loss of my illusions. I was hungry to believe in a twofold nature and in Swedenborg's angels! Will this new knowledge destroy them? Yes, the examination of some unknown powers implies a knowledge in appearance materialistic, for the SPIRIT utilizes, divides, animates substance; but it does not destroy it."

He sat for a moment lost in thought, half-sad. Perhaps his youthful dreams seemed to him like swaddling-clothes which he must soon lay aside.

"Sight and hearing," he said, laughing at his expression, "are doubtless the sheaths of a marvellous tool!"

Whenever he talked to me about Heaven and Hell, he was accustomed to gaze upon nature with the eye of a master; but as he uttered these last words, pregnant with knowledge, he soared over the landscape more audaciously than ever, and his brow seemed to me to be on the point of bursting with the mighty working of his genius; his forces, which we must call *moral* until further orders, seemed to gush out through the organs destined to give them vent; his eyes flashed thought; his uplifted hand, his mute,



quivering lips spoke; his ardent glance emitted gleams; at last, his head, as if it were too heavy or fatigued by a too vehement outburst, fell forward on his breast. That child, that giant stooped, took my hand, and pressed it in his, which was moist, so excited was he by his quest of the truth; then, after a pause, he said to me:

“I shall be a famous man!—And so will you,” he added, hastily. “We shall both be chemists of the will.”

Exquisitely noble heart! I realized his superiority, but he was very careful not to make me feel it. He shared with me the treasures of his thought, attributed to me some of the credit for his discoveries, and did not seek to deprive me of my own secret reflections. Always as gracious as a loving woman, he had all the modesty of feeling, all the delicacy of soul, which make life so sweet and so pleasant to endure.

He began the very next day a work which he entitled a *Treatise on the Will*; his plan and method of treatment were often modified by his reflections; but the event of that fateful day was certainly its germ, just as the electric sensation always experienced by Mesmer at the approach of a servant was the foundation of his discoveries in magnetism, a science previously hidden in the depths of the mysteries of Isis and Delphos, in the cave of Trophonius, and discovered by that extraordinary man who was within two steps of Lavater, the precursor of Gall. Illumined by that sudden ray of light, Lambert's

ideas assumed more extensive proportions; he singled out the truths that were scattered through his acquisitions, and collected them; then, like a founder, he moulded his group. After six months of constant application, Lambert's labors aroused the curiosity of our comrades and were the theme of divers cruel jests, which were destined to have a lamentable result. One day, one of our persecutors, who was determined to see our manuscripts, set several of our tyrants upon us and attempted to lay violent hands upon a box which contained those treasures and which Lambert and I defended with incredible courage. The box was locked and it was impossible for our assailants to open it; but they tried to break it in the *mêlée*, a dastardly trick which caused us to cry aloud. Some of our fellow-pupils, animated by a spirit of justice, or impressed by our heroic resistance, advised leaving us in peace and crushed us with impertinent compassion. Attracted by the uproar of the struggle, Father Haugoult suddenly appeared and inquired as to the cause of the dispute. Our adversaries had diverted our thoughts from our pensums, the regent defended his slaves. In order to excuse themselves, the assailants disclosed the existence of the manuscript. The awe-inspiring Haugoult ordered us to deliver the box to him; if we resisted, he might break it; Lambert handed him the key, the regent took the papers and turned them over; then he said to us as he proceeded to confiscate them:

“So this is the trash for which you neglect your duties!”

Great tears fell from Lambert's eyes, extorted no less by the consciousness of his outraged mental superiority than by the gratuitous insult and by the treachery which overwhelmed us. We bestowed a reproachful glance upon our accusers: had they not betrayed us to the common enemy? although they might fight us, according to schoolboy law, they should have kept silence concerning our faults. So they were a little ashamed of their dastardly behavior for a moment. Father Haugoult probably sold the *Treatise on the Will* to some grocer in Vendôme, ignorant of the value of the scientific treasures whose abortive seeds were scattered among unlearned hands.

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Six months later, I left the college. I do not know whether Lambert, whom our parting plunged into the blackest melancholy, began his work anew. It was in commemoration of the disaster which befell Louis's book, that, in the tale with which I began these studies,\* I gave to a fictitious work the title really invented by Lambert, and gave the name of a woman who was very dear to him to a young girl overflowing with the spirit of self-sacrifice; but these are not the only things I have borrowed from him: his character, his occupations, were of great service to me in that production, whose subject was due to some souvenir of our youthful meditations. Now, it is the purpose of this narrative to rear a modest column whereon shall be inscribed the story of his life who bequeathed to me all his wealth, his thoughts. In that work of a child, Lambert set forth the ideas of a man. Ten years later, when I fell in with certain scholars who were seriously studying the phenomena which had impressed us, and which Lambert analyzed so miraculously, I realized the importance of his labors, which I had then forgotten as mere childish folly. I passed several months trying to recall my poor schoolfellow's principal discoveries. After assembling all the facts that I can remember, I can assert that, as early as 1812, he

\* *Le Peau de Chagrin.*

had divined, formulated, and discussed in his treatise several important facts, the proofs of which would be afforded sooner or later, he assured me. His philosophical speculations ought surely to procure his admission to the ranks of those great thinkers who have appeared at intervals among men to reveal to them the bare principles of some science to come, whose roots grow slowly, and some day bear glorious fruit in the domain of intelligence. For instance, a poor mechanic, Bernard, who was engaged in digging in the earth to discover the secret of enamels, asserted, in the sixteenth century, with the infallible authority of genius, certain geological facts, the demonstration of which is to-day the glory of Buffon and Cuvier. I believe that I am able to give an idea of Lambert's treatise by the principal propositions upon which it was based; but, try as I will, I shall strip them of the ideas in which he had enveloped them and which were their indispensable accompaniment. Treading a path different from his, I took those of his investigations which best served my own theory. I am doubtful, therefore, whether I, his disciple, shall be able to translate his thoughts faithfully, after I have assimilated them in such a way as to give them the color of my own.

For new ideas, there must be new words or amplified, extended, more definite acceptations of old words: thus Lambert had chosen, to express the bases of his system, some words in common use which answered vaguely to his thought. The word WILL he used to denominate the *environment* in which

the *thought* performs its evolutions; or, to use a less abstract expression, the combined elements of force whereby man can reproduce, outside of himself, the acts which constitute his outward life. VOLITION, a word which we owe to the reflections of Locke, expressed the act whereby man makes use of the *will*. The word THOUGHT, in his view the essential product of the will, designated also the *environment* wherein the IDEAS are born of which it serves as the substance. The IDEA, a name common to all the creations of the brain, constituted the act whereby man makes use of the *thought*. Thus the will and the thought were the two generative agents; volition and the idea, the two products. Volition seemed to him to be the idea developed from its abstract state into a concrete state, from the fluid which it was when generated to a quasi-solid substance, if we may use these words to express conceptions so difficult to distinguish. According to him, thought and ideas are the movement and the acts of our inward being, as volition and will constitute those of our outward life.

He gave will precedence over thought.

"In order to think, one must exert the will," he said. "Many beings live in the state of willing, and yet never arrive at the state of thought. In the North, life is long; in the South, short; but in the North we find universal torpor, in the South constant excitation of the will; until we reach the line where, in the one case because of too great cold, in the other of too great heat, the organs are almost reduced to naught."

The expression *environment*—*milieu*—was suggested to him by an observation made during his childhood, of which he certainly did not suspect the importance, but which was so strange that it was certain to impress his delicately sensitive imagination. His mother, a fragile, nervous person, consequently very delicate and very affectionate, was one of those creatures destined to represent woman in the perfection of her attributes, but whom fate wrongfully relegates to the lowest rung of the social ladder. All love, therefore all suffering, she died young, after concentrating her faculties upon maternal love. Lambert, a child of six, lying in a great cradle by his mother's bedside, but not always asleep, saw electric sparks fly from her hair while she was combing it. The man of fifteen grasped for the benefit of science that fact with which the child had played, an irrefragable fact many proofs of which may be found in almost all women in whom a certain fatality of their destiny leaves unappreciated sentiments to be exhaled, or an indefinable superabundance of force to be wasted.

In support of his definitions, Lambert added several problems to be solved, challenges gallantly hurled at science, of which he proposed to seek the solutions, asking himself these questions: Does not the active principle of electricity enter as a basic element into the special fluid whence our ideas and our volitions spring? does not the hair, which fades, becomes thin, falls out, and disappears according to the various degrees of demolition or crystallization of the thoughts,



constitute an electric capillary system, absorbent or exhalant? are not the fluid phenomena of our will—a substance created within us, and reacting so readily at the will of conditions as yet unstudied—more extraordinary than those of the invisible, intangible fluid produced by the voltaic battery on the nervous system of a dead man? are the formation of our ideas and their constant exhalation less incomprehensible than the evaporation of corpuscles, imperceptible to the eye, and yet so violent in their action, of which a grain of musk is susceptible without loss of weight? admitting that the purpose of the cutaneous formation of our envelope is wholly defensive, absorbent, exhalant, tactile, do not the circulation of the blood and its mechanism correspond to the transubstantiation of our will, as the circulation of the nervous fluid corresponds to that of the thought? Lastly, does not the more or less active flow of these two real substances result from the perfection or imperfection of organs whose condition should be studied in all their moods?

These principles established, he proposed to classify the phenomena of human life in two series of distinct results and, with eager insistence of conviction, demanded for each of them a special analysis. Furthermore, after he had observed in almost all created things two distinct varieties of motion, he formulated them, admitted them as applying equally to our nature, and named that vital antagonism: **ACTION AND REACTION.**

“A desire,” he said, “is a fact wholly accomplished in our will before it is accomplished outwardly.”

Thus, he held that the whole body of our volitions and our ideas constituted *action*, the whole body of our outward acts *reaction*.

When, at a later date, I read Bichat's observations on the dualism of our outward senses, I was bewildered by my memories, detecting a striking coincidence between that celebrated physiologist's ideas and those of Lambert. They both died prematurely, having marched forward at an equal pace toward I know not what great truths. Nature has been pleased to implant in everything a twofold destination to the divers elemental mechanisms of its creations, and the twofold action of our organism, which is no longer a disputable fact, supports by a mass of proofs of daily occurrence Lambert's deductions relative to *action* and *reaction*. The *acting*—*actionnel*—or inward being, a phrase which he used to demonstrate the unknown *species*, the mysterious collection of slender fibres to which are due the various inadequately studied powers of thought, of the will,—in a word, that unnamed being, which sees, acts, perfects, accomplishes everything before making any corporeal demonstration,—cannot, consistently with its nature, be subjected to any of the physical conditions by which the *reacting*—*reactionnel*—or outward being, the visible man, is restrained in his manifestations. Thence followed a multitude of logical explanations of those results of our twofold nature which are apparently the most eccentric, and the rectification of several theories which are at the same time true and false. Certain men, having caught a

glimpse of the natural working of the *actionnel* being, are, like Swedenborg, carried outside of the real world by an ardent soul, in love with poesy, drunken with the divine essence. Thus, in their ignorance of causes, in their admiration of the result, they amuse themselves by deifying that secret mechanism, by building a mystic universe. Thence, the angels! blissful illusions which Lambert was loath to renounce; he continued to caress them after the sword of his analysis had clipped their dazzling wings.

"Heaven," he said to me, "must be, after all, the *survival* of our perfected faculties, and Hell the nothingness into which our imperfect faculties fall."

But how, in the ages when the understanding retained the religious and spiritualistic impressions which held sway between Christ and Descartes, between faith and doubt,—how could man explain the mysteries of our inward nature otherwise than by divine intervention? From whom, if not from God Himself, could scholars seek an explanation of an invisible creature so actively, so reactively sensitive to impressions, and endowed with faculties so extensive, capable of being so perfected by nature, or so potent under the influence of certain hidden conditions, that sometimes they saw it, by a phenomenon of vision or locomotion, annihilate space in its two elements of time and distance, one of which is intellectual, the other physical space; and that sometimes they saw it reconstruct the past, whether by the power of retrospective vision, or by the mystery

of a palingenesis not unlike the power which a man might possess of recognizing by the appearance, the tegument, and the rudiments of a seed, its previous blossoming in its innumerable modifications of coloring, of perfume, of shape; and, lastly, that they sometimes saw it divine in an imperfect degree the future, whether by the perception of first causes or by a physical phenomenon of presentiment?

Other men, less poetically religious, cold and argumentative, charlatans perhaps, enthusiasts of the brain, at least, if not of the heart, recognizing some of these isolated phenomena, have assumed them to be true without considering them as irradiations from a common centre. Each of them thereupon attempted to convert a simple fact into a science. Such was the origin of demonology, judicial astrology, witchcraft,—in a word, all the varieties of divination based upon incidents essentially transitory, because they varied according to temperaments, controlled by circumstances still entirely unknown. But from these learned errors and from the ecclesiastical disputes in which so many martyrs of their own faculties succumbed spring convincing proofs of the prodigious power wielded by the *actionnel* being, who, according to Lambert, can isolate himself completely from the *reactionnel* being, can shelter his envelope, level walls before his all-powerful vision; a phenomenon called *tokeiade* by the Hindoos, according to the missionaries; and, by virtue of another faculty, can grasp in the brain, notwithstanding the thickness of

its wrappings, the ideas which have formed or are forming there, and the whole past of the conscience.

"If apparitions are not impossible," said Lambert, "they must take place through the instrumentality of some faculty of detecting the ideas which represent man in his pure essence, and whose existence, imperishable perhaps, escapes our outward senses, but may become perceptible to the inward being when it reaches a high degree of exaltation, or great clearness of vision."

I know, although the subject lies somewhat vaguely in my mind to-day, that, following step by step the effects of thought and will in all their manifestations, after setting forth the laws that govern them, Lambert explained a multitude of phenomena which, until he took them in hand, had been considered, and with good reason, incomprehensible. For instance, witches, persons possessed by devils, those possessed of second-sight, and demoniacs of all varieties, those victims of the Middle Ages, were explained by him so naturally, that the simplicity of the explanation often seemed to me to be the seal of truth. The marvellous gifts which the Roman Church, jealous of all mysteries, punished by the stake, were, according to Louis, the result of certain affinities between the constituent principles of matter and those of thought, which proceed from the same source. The man armed with the hazel wand obeyed, in his quest of living springs, some sympathy or some antipathy unknown to himself; nothing less than the oddity of results of this sort would

have sufficed to give some of them historic certainty. Sympathies have seldom been formulated. They constitute sources of pleasure which those who are fortunate enough to be endowed with them rarely publish to the world in the absence of some egregious singularity; and even then it is made known only in the secrecy of private life, where everything is forgotten. But the antipathies which result from thwarted affinities have very fortunately been noted when they have been observed in famous men. For instance, Bayle was seized with convulsions when he heard running water; Scaliger turned pale at the sight of water-cress; Erasmus had a fever at the smell of fish. These three antipathies proceeded from aquatic substances. The Duc d'Epemon fainted at sight of a young hare; Tycho Brahe, at sight of a fox; Henri III., at sight of a cat; Maréchal d'Albret, at sight of a wild boar; all these antipathies being produced by animal emanations, and frequently experienced at tremendous distances. The Chevalier de Guise, Marie de Medici, and several other historical personages were always made ill by the sight of any kind of rose, even a painted one. Lord Bacon always swooned when there was an eclipse of the moon, whether he was or was not warned of its coming; and his life, which was suspended throughout the whole duration of the phenomenon, resumed its course immediately after it was at an end without leaving the slightest ill effect. These authentic effects of antipathies taken at random from those which history has



commemorated may suffice to enable us to understand unexplained sympathies. This fragment of investigation which I have recalled among all Lambert's discoveries will convey an idea of his method of procedure in his work.

I do not think that I need to insist upon the connection between this theory and the collateral sciences invented by Gall and Lavater; they were its natural corollaries, and every mind with the slightest taste for science will detect the ramifications by which the phrenological observations of the one and the physiognomical documents of the other are connected. Mesmer's discovery, so far-reaching and imperfectly understood even to-day, was contained in its entirety in a single development of this treatise, although Lambert was not acquainted with the famous Swiss doctor's works, which are exceedingly laconic, by the way. A simple, logical deduction from these principles had convinced him that the will might be concentrated by a purely contractile movement of the inward being; then, by another movement, be projected outward, and even be lodged in material objects. It followed that a man's entire force must have the property of reacting upon others, and of inoculating them with an essence foreign to their own, if they did not defend themselves against this aggression. The proofs of this theorem of human knowledge are necessarily multifold; but they are nowhere authentically stated. It required something like the notorious disaster to Marius and his allocution to the Cimbrian, who was ordered to kill



him, or the august behest of a mother to the Lion of Florence, to furnish some historical instances of these thunderbolts of thought. To him, then, the will, the thought, were *live forces*; and he spoke of them in a way to make you share his beliefs. To him, these two powers were in some sense both visible and tangible. To him, thought was slow or rapid, heavy or alert, clear or obscure; he attributed to it all the qualities of acting beings, represented it as rushing impetuously forth, reposing, awaking, increasing in size, growing old, shrinking, becoming wasted, and reviving; he detected symptoms of life in it, specifying all its acts by the odd terms of our language; he asserted its spontaneity, its strength, and all its qualities with a sort of intuition which made all its phenomena easy of identification by him.

“Often when all is calm and silent,” he said to me, “when our inward faculties are sleeping, when we abandon ourselves to the sweet sensation of repose, when a sort of darkness spreads over us and we fall into contemplation of outward things, suddenly an idea bursts forth, passes with the rapidity of lightning through the boundless spaces which our inward vision enables us to perceive. That brilliant idea, springing up like a will-o’-the-wisp, fades away forever: an ephemeral existence, like the existences of those children through whom their parents suffer boundless joy and sorrow; a sort of flower still-born in the fields of thought. Sometimes the idea, instead of rushing violently forth and dying without result,

appears little by little, hesitates in the unknown confines of the organs where it takes its birth; it exhausts us by a long labor, develops, becomes fruitful, grows apace in the charm of youth, embellished with all the attributes of a long life; it endures the most inquisitive glances, it attracts and never tires them: the scrutiny which it provokes commands the admiration aroused by works upon whose elaboration much time has been spent. Sometimes ideas are born in swarms, one draws on another, they form a long chain, they multiply, they are all stimulating, frantic. Sometimes they are pale and confused on making their appearance, and perish for want of strength and aliment; the generative substance is lacking. And, lastly, on certain days they rush headlong into deep abysses to illumine their bottomless depths; they terrify us, and leave our minds crushed. Ideas form a complete system within us like one of the natural kingdoms, a sort of botanical system, which will be represented iconographically by some man of genius who perhaps will be called mad. Yes, everything, within us and without, demonstrates the life of those ravishingly beautiful creations which I compare to flowers, obeying some revelation of their nature which I cannot define. Nor is their production, as a development of man, any more surprising than that of perfume and color in the plant. Perhaps perfumes are ideas! When we reflect that the line where the flesh ends and the nail begins contains the invisible and inexplicable mystery of the constant transformation of our fluids into horn, we must

realize that nothing is impossible in the marvellous modifications of the human substance. But do we not find in moral nature phenomena of motion and weight similar to those of physical nature? *Suspense*, to select an example which can be felt intensely by everybody, is painful only through the effect of the law by virtue of which the weight of a body is multiplied by its velocity. The weight of the sensation which suspense produces is increased, is it not, by a constant addition of past sufferings to the pain of the moment? Furthermore, to what, if not an electric substance, can we attribute the magical power whereby the will asserts itself so majestically in the glance to overthrow obstacles at the bidding of genius, the power whereby it makes itself felt in the voice, or finds its way, despite hypocrisy, through the human envelope? The current of that king of fluids which, following the high pressure of the thought or the feeling, submerges everything or contracts and becomes a mere thread, then masses its forces to burst forth in lightning, is the concealed minister to whom are due the efforts, whether harmful or beneficent, of the arts and passions; it may be the intonations of the voice, by turns harsh, honeyed, awe-inspiring, lascivious, blood-curdling, fascinating, which vibrates in the heart, in the entrails, or in the brain as we will; it may be all the marvellous delicacy of the touch, from which proceeds the mental transfusion of so many artists whose creative hands are enabled, after years of passionate study, to evoke nature; lastly, it may be the infinite

gradations of the eye, from its dull lifelessness to its most terrifying gleams. Under this system, God loses none of His rights. Material thought has told me new grandeurs of Him!"

After hearing him talk thus, after receiving his glance like a bright light in one's mind, it was very hard not to be blinded by his conviction, carried away by his arguments. Thus THOUGHT appeared to me as a purely physical power, accompanied by its incalculably numerous progeny. It was a new mankind in another shape. The foregoing simple abstract of the laws which, as Lambert claimed, govern our intelligence, should suffice to convey an idea of the prodigious activity with which his mind consumed itself. Louis had sought proofs of his principles in the history of great men, whose lives, given to the world by biographers, furnish curious bits of information concerning the workings of their understanding. As his memory enabled him to recall facts which might serve to develop his statements, he annexed them to each of his chapters to which they served as a sort of demonstration, so that several of his maxims acquired an almost mathematical certainty. The works of Cardan, a man endowed with extraordinary power of vision, furnished him with valuable material. He forgot neither Apollonius Tyanæus, who announced in Asia the death of the tyrant and described his torture at the very hour when it was taking place in Rome; nor Plotinus, who, when he and Porphyry were far apart, became conscious of the latter's

intention to kill himself and hurried to him to dissuade him; nor the fact recorded in the last century in the face of the most mocking incredulity that was ever known,—a fact most astonishing to men who were accustomed to use doubt as a weapon against itself alone, but perfectly simple to a few believers: Alphonse-Marie de Liguori, Bishop of Sainte-Agathe, offered religious consolation to the Pope Ganganelli, who saw him, heard him, and replied to him; the bishop being, at the same time, at a very great distance from Rome, and sitting in a trance, in the chair in which he usually sat on his return from mass. On returning to life, he found his servants kneeling about him, all thinking that he was dead. “My friends,” he said, “the Holy Father has just expired.” Two days later, the fact was confirmed by a courier. The hour of the Pope’s death coincided with that at which the bishop had returned to his natural state. Nor did Lambert omit the still more recent adventure which befell a young Englishwoman in the last century: she was passionately in love with a sailor, started from London to join him, and all alone, without a guide, found him in the deserts of North America, where she arrived in time to save his life. Louis placed under contribution the mysteries of antiquity, the deeds of the martyrs, wherein are to be found the human will’s noblest titles to glory, the demonologists of the Middle Ages, criminal trials, medical investigations, discerning everywhere the real fact, the probable phenomenon, with wonderful sagacity. That rich collection of scientific anecdotes,

collected from so many books, and for the most part worthy of faith, were used, I doubt not, to wrap groceries in; and that work, curious, to say the least, and produced by the most extraordinary of human memories, was destined to perish.

Among the numerous proofs which enriched Lambert's work was an incident which happened in his own family, and of which he had told me before undertaking his treatise. That incident, relating to the *post-existence* of the inward being,—if I may be allowed to coin a new word to define an unnamed phenomenon,—impressed me so deeply that I have never forgotten it.—His father and mother had to defend a lawsuit the loss of which would leave a stain upon their integrity, their only earthly possession. So that there was a most anxious discussion of the question whether they should yield to the plaintiff's unjust demands or defend themselves against them. The discussion took place one autumn night in front of a peat-fire, in the bedroom of the tanner and his wife. Two or three kinsmen were summoned to the council, including Louis's maternal great-grandfather, an old bent husbandman, whose face, however, was venerable and majestic, whose eyes were bright and clear, and whose skull, yellowed by time, still retained a few scattered locks of white hair. Like the *obi* of the negroes, the *sagamore* of the savages, he was a sort of oracle always consulted on great occasions. His fields were tilled by his grandchildren, who supported him and waited upon him; he foretold rain and fine weather,



and indicated to them the time when they must mow the fields or harvest the crops. The barometer-like wisdom of his words, which had become celebrated, increased still more the confidence and veneration with which he was regarded. He would sit for whole days without moving from his chair. That trance-like state had been a common thing since the death of his wife, for whom he had had a most earnest and abiding affection. The discussion took place in his presence, but he seemed to pay little heed to it.

"My children," he said, when he was called upon to give his opinion, "this affair is too serious for me to decide it alone. I must go and consult my wife."

The goodman rose, took his stick, and left the room, to the vast amazement of those present, who believed that he was in his second childhood. He soon returned and said to them:

"I did not need to go as far as the cemetery, for your mother came to meet me; I met her by the brook. She told me that you would find in the hands of a notary at Blois certain releases which would enable you to win your suit."

The words were uttered in a firm voice. The grandfather's manner and expression were those of a man to whom the apparition was no new thing. The releases whose existence was denied were actually found at Blois, and the suit was abandoned.

This episode, happening under his father's roof and in his own presence,—he was nine years old at the time,—contributed materially to Louis's belief in



the miraculous visions of Swedenborg, who afforded during his life several proofs of the power of vision acquired by his inward being. As he advanced in years and his intelligence developed, Lambert was certain to be led to seek in the laws of human nature the causes of the miracle which had attracted his notice in his boyhood. By what name shall we call the chance which gathered about him facts and books relating to those phenomena, and made himself the scene of and the principal actor in the greatest marvels of thought? Even if Louis had no other claim to glory than having evolved, at the age of fifteen, this psychological maxim: "Events which attest the action of mankind, and which are the product of its intelligence, have causes wherein they are preconceived, as our acts are performed in our thought before they are reproduced outwardly; presentiments or prophecies are the shadow of these causes;" I believe that we should deplore in his death the loss of a genius equal to that of the Pascals, the Lavoisiers, and the Laplaces. It may be that his fanciful ideas concerning angels influenced his works too long; but was it not while trying to make gold that scholars unwittingly created the science of chemistry? However, the fact that Lambert subsequently studied comparative anatomy, physics, geometry, and all the sciences bearing on his discoveries, necessarily proves that it was his intention to collect facts and proceed by analysis, the only torch which can guide us to-day through the obscurities of the least comprehensible of natural

phenomena. He certainly had too much sense to remain in the cloud of theories, all of which can be translated in a few words. In these days, the simplest demonstration based upon facts is of more value than the finest systems defended by deductions more or less ingenious. But as I did not know him during that portion of his life when his reflections must have borne the fairest fruit, I can only conjecture the scope of his subsequent works according to that of his earliest meditations.

It is easy to see wherein his *Treatise on the Will* was faulty. Although he was already endowed with the qualities which distinguish men of superior mould, he was still a child. Although rich in abstractions and adroit in dealing with them, his brain was still under the spell of the charming beliefs which hover around all youth. Thus his conception touched the ripe fruit of genius at several points, but at a multitude of others was closely allied to its humble seed. To some minds, enamored of poetry, his great defect would have seemed to be a lack of relish. His work bore marks of the struggle waged in that noble soul between those two great principles, spiritualism and materialism, around which so many great geniuses have revolved, not daring to blend them into a single one. A pure spiritualist at the outset, Louis had been irresistibly led to recognize the materiality of thought. Vanquished by the cold facts of analysis at a time when his heart still impelled him to gaze lovingly at the clouds scattered through Swedenborg's heaven, he did not as yet consider himself

sufficiently strong to produce a unitary, compact system, cast in a single mould. Thence came some contradictions, evident even in the slight sketch I have given of his first flights. However incomplete his work may have been, may we not call it the rough draft of a science of which he had fathomed the mysteries, made secure the foundations, sought out, deduced, and linked together the developments?



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Six months after the confiscation of the *Treatise on the Will*, I left the college. Our parting was sudden and unexpected. My mother, frightened by a fever which had been hanging about me for some time, and to which my lack of bodily exercise gave the symptoms of *coma*, took me away at four or five hours' notice. When I told him of my impending departure, Lambert became terribly sad. We concealed ourselves in order to weep at our ease.

"Shall I never see you again?" he said to me in his sweet voice, pressing me in his arms.—"You will live," he added, "but I shall die. If I can, I will appear to you."

One must needs be young to utter such words with an accent of conviction which causes them to be accepted as a presage, as a promise whose terrible fulfilment will constantly be dreaded. For a long time I thought vaguely of that promised apparition. Even now I have certain days of spleen, of doubt, of terror, of solitude, when I am obliged to drive away the memory of that melancholy parting, which, by the way, was not to be the last. When I passed through the courtyard leading to the street, Lambert's face was glued to one of the barred windows of the refectory to watch me pass. At my request, my mother obtained permission to take him to dine with us at the public-house. And in the evening I

## LOUIS LAMBERT

walked back with him to the fatal gateway of the college. Never did lover and mistress shed more tears at parting than we.

"Adieu! I am to be left alone in that desert," he said, pointing to the playground where two hundred children were playing and shouting: "When I return, tired out, half-dead from my long journeys through the fields of thought, on what heart shall I find rest? A single glance sufficed for me to tell you everything. Who will understand me now? Adieu! I would I had never met you, then I should never know how much I am going to miss."

"And what will become of me?" I said; "is not my situation even more horrible? I have nothing here to comfort me," I added, striking my forehead.

He shook his head with a graceful movement instinct with sadness, and we parted.

At that time, Louis Lambert was five feet and two inches tall; he grew no taller. His face, which had become exceedingly expressive, attested the kindness of his character. Divine patience developed by ill-usage, the unremitting concentration demanded by his contemplative life, had deprived his glance of that audacious pride which is so attractive in certain faces and by which he was able to crush our regents. His face beamed with peaceful sentiments, a charming serenity which was never impaired by the slightest trace of irony or mockery, for his innate kindness tempered his consciousness of his strength and his superiority. He had pretty hands,

always almost moist, with tapering fingers. His body was a marvel, worthy of the sculptor's chisel; but our iron-gray uniforms, with gilt buttons, our knee-breeches, made our figures so ungraceful, that the perfection of Lambert's proportions and his softness and delicacy could be appreciated only in the bath. When we went swimming in our little basin of the Loir, Louis was easily distinguishable by the whiteness of his skin, which stood out in striking contrast to the diverse shades of skin of our comrades, all purple with cold or streaked by the water. Of shapely figure, graceful in his attitudes, slightly flushed, never shivering when out of the water,—perhaps because he always avoided the shade and ran about in the sun,—Louis resembled those far-sighted flowers which close in the north wind and prefer not to bloom unless the sky is clear. He ate very little, drank nothing but water; and, whether from instinct or from inclination, he was very shy of all motion that required an expenditure of strength; his gestures were infrequent and as simple as those of Oriental peoples or savages, in whom gravity seems to be a natural condition. Generally speaking, he was averse to aught that savored of foppishness about his person. He almost always carried his head inclined to the left, and leaned on his elbows so much of the time that the sleeves of his new coats were soon worn through. To this rapid portrait of the man, I must add a sketch of his moral nature, for I believe that I am able to-day to pass judgment on it impartially.



Although naturally religious, Louis would not brook the minute ceremonial of the Church of Rome: his ideas were more directly in accord with those of Sainte-Thérèse and Fénelon and of several Fathers and a few saints, who in our day would be treated as heresiarchs and atheists. He was unmoved during religious services. His prayers came in sudden outbursts, in paroxysms of mental exaltation which followed no regular system; in everything he gave nature a free rein, and no more attempted to pray than to think at stated hours. Often, in the chapel, he would think about God just as if he were meditating some philosophical conception. Jesus Christ was in his view the noblest type of his system. The *Et Verbum caro factum est!* seemed to him a sublime sentence intended to express the traditional formula of the Will, the Word, the Act, making themselves visible. The fact that Christ was not conscious of His own death, having so perfected the inward being by divine works that its invisible form appeared one day to His disciples; that fact and the mysteries of the Gospels, Christ's magnetic cures, and the gift of tongues were to him confirmations of his doctrine. I remember to have heard him say on this subject that the noblest work that could be written to-day was the history of the primitive Church. He never rose so nearly to the level of poetry as at the moment when, in conversation one evening, he essayed to examine the miracles performed by the power of the Will in that great epoch of faith. He found the strongest proofs

of his theory in almost all the martyrdoms undergone during the first century of the Church's existence, which he called *the great era of thought*.

"The phenomena observed in most of the tortures so heroically endured by the Christians for the establishment of their beliefs prove, do they not," he said, "that material forces will never prevail against the force of ideas or against the will of man? Every man can draw conclusions favorable to his own will from this effect produced by the universal will."

I do not deem it my duty to speak of his ideas concerning poetry and history, nor of his opinions concerning the masterpieces of our literature. There would be no great interest attaching to a statement here of opinions which have become almost commonplace to-day, but which might well have had an extraordinary sound in the mouth of a child at that time. Louis was abreast of everything. To describe his talent in a word, he could have written *Zadig* as wittily as Voltaire wrote it; and he could have thought out the dialogue between Sylla and Eucrates as powerfully as Montesquieu. The perfect rectitude of his ideas led him to desire utility, first of all, in a work, just as his refined mind demanded novelty of thought as well as novelty of form. Whatever did not satisfy these conditions disgusted him profoundly. One of his most remarkable literary judgments, which will convey an excellent idea of them all, as well of their acumen as of their lucidity, was this, which I have always remembered: "The Apocalypse is a written trance."

He looked upon the Bible as a portion of the traditional history of the antediluvian peoples which they shared with the new humanity. In his view, the Greek mythology was allied to the Hebrew Bible and also to the sacred books of the Indies, which that nation, enamored of graceful forms, had translated in its own way.

“It is impossible,” he said, “to cast a doubt upon the priority of the Asiatic Scriptures to our Holy Scriptures. To him who is not afraid to acknowledge in good faith that historical point, the world seems vastly larger. Must it not have been the Asian plateau upon which the few men took refuge who survived the catastrophe undergone by our globe, assuming that man existed before that upheaval or that overthrow? a momentous question of which the solution is written at the bottom of the sea. The anthropogeny of the Bible, therefore, is simply the genealogy of a swarm which came forth from the human hive that clung to the mountainous slopes of Thibet, between the peaks of the Himalayas and those of the Caucasus. The nature of the first ideas of that horde, which its lawmaker styled God’s people, doubtless to give it unity, perhaps also to enable it to retain its own laws and its system of government,—for the books of Moses contain a religious, political, and civil code,—the nature of its ideas bears the stamp of terror; the convulsion of the globe is interpreted as an act of vengeance from on high by gigantic minds. And, as it tasted none of the delights enjoyed by a people settled on its

patriarchal territory, the miseries of that nomadic tribe inspired none but gloomy, majestic, and blood-thirsty poems. On the other hand, the spectacle of the speedy rehabilitation of the earth, the prodigious effects of the sun, which the Hindoos were the first to witness, inspired in them the joyous conceptions of happy love, the worship of fire, the endless personifications of reproduction. These magnificent images are lacking in the work of the Hebrews. The constant necessity of self-preservation, through the perils of the countries they traversed before reaching their place of repose, gave birth to the exclusive sentiment of that people and its hatred of other nations. These three scriptures are the archives of the world that was engulfed. Therein lies the secret of the extraordinary grandeur of the languages and of their myths. A great human story lies beneath those names of men and places, beneath those fictions which attract us irresistibly, we know not why. Perhaps we breathe in them the natal air of our new humanity."

Thus that threefold literature foreshadowed in his view all the thoughts of man. Not a book is written, according to him, whose germ cannot be found therein. This opinion shows how judiciously his first studies of the Bible were carried on, and how far they led him. Soaring always above society, which he knew only through books, he judged it without passion.

"The laws," he said, "never check the undertakings of the great or the rich, but smite the

humble, who, on the contrary, most need protection."

His kindly nature did not permit him to sympathize with political ideas; but his system led to the passive obedience of which the example was set by Jesus Christ. During the last moments of my stay at Vendôme, Louis no longer felt the spur of glory, he had, in some sort, enjoyed renown in the abstract; and after opening it, like the sacrificers of old who sought the future in the hearts of human victims, he found nothing in the entrails of that chimera. In his contempt of a purely personal sentiment, he said to me:

"Glory is egoism deified."

At this point, before leaving this exceptional childhood, it will be well, perhaps, to characterize it briefly.

Some time before our separation, Lambert said to me:

"Aside from the general laws the formulation of which will, perhaps, be my glory, and which must be the laws of our organism, the life of man is a movement which follows a special course in each individual, at the will of I know not what influence, exerted through the brain, the heart, or the nerves. From the three systems represented by these three common words are derived the infinite variations of mankind, all of which result from the proportions in which these three generative elements exist, combined more or less perfectly with the substances which they assimilate in the surroundings in which they live."

He paused a moment, put his hand to his forehead, and continued:

"It is a singular fact that all of the great men whose portraits have attracted my attention have short necks. Perhaps it is nature's design that in them the heart shall be nearer the brain."

He continued:

"Thence proceeds a certain collection of acts which constitutes social existence. To the man of nerves, action or power; to the man of brain, genius; to the man of heart, faith. But," he added, sadly, "to faith, the clouds of the sanctuary; to the angel only, light."

According to his own definitions, Lambert was all heart and all brain.

In my view, the life of his intelligence is divided into three phases.

Subjected, from infancy, to precocious mental activity, due, doubtless, to some disease, or to the extraordinary perfection of his organs, from infancy his strength was concentrated on the working of his inward senses and a superabundant production of nervous fluid. Being a man of ideas, he must needs quench the thirst of his brain, which strove to assimilate all ideas. Hence his reading; and as a result of his reading, his reflections, which gave him the power of reducing things to their simplest expression, of absorbing them in order to study them within himself in their essence. The benefits of that glorious period, which most men reach only after long-continued study, fell to Lambert during

his bodily childhood; a happy childhood, a childhood colored by the studious joys of the poet. The point at which most brains end their journey was the point from which his was destined to set out one day in search of some new intellectual worlds. There, unconsciously as yet, he had created for himself the most exacting and the most insatiably greedy of all lives. In order to live, must he not constantly toss sustenance into the abyss which he had opened in himself? Like certain inhabitants of worldly spheres, he might perish for lack of food to satisfy abnormal, mistaken appetites. What was it but dissipation transplanted into the mind, which must evidently result, as with bodies saturated with alcohol, in sudden combustion? Of this first cerebral phase I knew nothing; only of late have I been able to explain its prodigious fructification and its results. Lambert was then thirteen years old.

I was fortunate enough to be with him during the early days of his second phase. Lambert—and perhaps that saved him—was thrown at that time into all the miseries of school-life, and expended therein the superabundance of his thoughts. After passing from things to their purest expression, from words to their ideal substance, from that substance to principles, after reducing everything to an abstract form, he aspired to other intellectual creations to enable him to live. Cowed by his wretched experiences at the college and by his physical sufferings, he remained meditative, divined the feelings of others, caught glimpses of new sciences, veritable



masses of ideas! Checked in his course, and still too weak to look toward higher spheres, he turned his gaze inward upon himself. He thereupon exhibited to me the struggles of the mind reacting upon itself and seeking to detect the secrets of its nature, like a physician who should study the progress of his own disease. In that condition of strength and weakness, of childlike grace and superhuman power, Louis Lambert afforded me the most poetic, the truest, conception of the creature we call *an angel*, with the exception of a woman whose name, features, character, and life I prefer to conceal from the world, that I may feel that only I have known the secret of her existence and may bury it in the bottom of my heart.

The third phase was destined to escape me. It was beginning when I parted from Louis, who did not leave college until he was eighteen years old, about the middle of the year 1815. His father and mother had then been dead about six months. Finding no one in his family with whom his mind, always expansive but always held in check since our separation, was in sympathy, he took refuge with his uncle, who had been appointed his guardian, and having been deprived of his living because he had taken the oath of 1790, had gone to Blois to live. Louis stayed with him for some time. Ere long, consumed by the desire to finish studies which he could but regard as incomplete, he came to Paris to see Madame de Staël and to imbibe learning at its loftiest sources. The old priest, having a great

weakness for his nephew, left him at liberty to squander his patrimony in a sojourn of three years at Paris, although he lived in the most profound destitution. That patrimony consisted of a few thousand francs. Lambert returned to Blois early in 1820, driven from Paris by the privations to which people without means are subjected there. During his residence in the capital, he must often have fallen a prey to hidden storms, to those terrible tempests of thought by which artists are assailed, if we may judge by the only circumstance which his uncle could recall, by the only letter the worthy man retained of all that Louis Lambert wrote him at that period, which letter owed its preservation, perhaps, to the fact that it was the last and longest of them all.

The circumstance was this. Louis was at the Théâtre-Français one day, sitting on a bench in the second gallery, near one of the columns between which the boxes of the third tier were located at that time. When he stood up during the first entr'acte, he saw a young woman, who had just arrived, in the box nearest him. The sight of that woman, young and beautiful, well-dressed, perhaps décolletée, and attended by a lover for whom her face was illumined by all the charms of love, produced so painful an effect upon Lambert's mind and senses that he was obliged to leave the hall. If he had not availed himself of the last gleams of his reason, which was not entirely extinct in the early moments of that frenzied passion, perhaps he would have yielded to the almost irresistible longing he then felt to kill the young

man upon whom that woman's glances were bestowed. It was a flash, in our Parisian world, of the love of the savage who hurls himself upon a woman as upon his prey, an effect of the combination of bestial instinct with the sudden, almost luminous outburst of a mind crushed beneath the weight of its thoughts. It was the imaginary knife-thrust felt by the child, transformed in the man into the thunderbolt of his most imperative need, love!

And this is the letter in which is depicted the condition of his mind under the influence of the spectacle of Parisian civilization. His heart, constantly wounded, doubtless, in that abyss of selfishness, was destined always to suffer there; he met neither friends to console him nor enemies to give spice to his life. Compelled to live always in himself, and sharing with no one his exquisite enjoyments, it may be that he determined to solve his destiny by a suspension of his external senses, and to lead almost the life of a plant, like an anchorite of the early days of the Church, thus abdicating the empire of the intellectual world. The letter seems to point to this plan, by which great minds have been attracted at every period of social renovation. But is not this resolution in some cases the result of a vocation? Do they not seek to concentrate their forces by a long period of silence, that they may emerge from it competent to govern the world by word or by deed? Certainly, Louis must have reaped much bitterness among men, or have compressed society by some terrible sarcasm without succeeding in extracting

anything from it, to have uttered such a vehement outcry, to have arrived—poor devil that he was!—at the desire to which weariness of power and of everything else has brought certain sovereigns. Or perhaps he intended to complete in solitude some great work which was floating indefinitely in his brain. Who would not readily believe it on reading this fragment of his thoughts wherein are manifested the struggles of his mind at the moment when his youth came to an end, when the awe-inspiring faculty of production to which the works of the man were due was just beginning to bloom? This letter bears a close relation to the incident at the theatre. The episode and the document mutually illumine each other; the soul and the body were in accord. This tempest of doubts and assertions, of clouds and lightning-flashes whence the thunderbolt often escapes, and which ends with a famished yearning for the divine light, elucidates the third period of his moral education sufficiently to enable one to understand it in its entirety. As you read these pages written at odd moments, laid aside and resumed according to the caprices of Parisian life, is it not as if you were looking at an oak during the period when its interior growth causes its pretty green shell to burst, covers it with knobs and cracks, preparing for the majestic shape it will attain hereafter, if the thunderbolts of heaven or the axe of man respect it?

This letter, then, will mark the close, for the thinker as for the poet, of that boyish grandeur and

that misunderstood youth. With it ends the shaping of that moral germ; philosophers will regret its foliage, withered by frost in the bud; but doubtless they will see its flowers blossoming in regions more exalted than the loftiest earthly peaks.

“Paris, September-November, 1819.

“DEAR UNCLE,

“I propose soon to leave this place, where I could not live. I find no man here to love what I love, to be interested in what interests me, to be surprised by what surprises me. Forced to fall back upon myself, I dig within myself and it hurts me. The long and patient study I have made of society here leads me to depressing conclusions in which doubt predominates. Here, money is the starting-point in everything. One must have money, even to do without money. But although money is essential to anybody who wishes to be able to think in peace, I do not feel that I have the courage to make it the only motive of my thoughts. In order to amass a fortune, one must choose a profession,—in a word, must purchase by virtue of some privilege of position or influence, by a legal privilege or one very adroitly created, the right to take each day, from another person’s purse, a trifling sum which produces year by year a little capital; the result, after twenty years, being a paltry four or five thousand francs a year when a man conducts his business honorably. In fifteen or sixteen years, not including his apprenticeship, the notary, the solicitor, the

tradesman, all licensed workers, have earned enough to assure them a crust in their old age. I have felt that I was not fit for anything of that sort. I prefer thought to action, an idea to a stroke of business, contemplation to motion. I lack utterly the power of constant attention essential to everyone who wishes to make a fortune. Any mercantile enterprise, any pursuit that compelled me to ask another person for money, would fare badly with me, and I should soon be ruined. If I have nothing, at all events I owe nothing at this moment. The man who seeks to accomplish great things in the moral order, needs but little material sustenance; but, although twenty sous a day would suffice for my wants, I do not possess even the income necessary to support me in my laborious idleness. If I wish to meditate, want drives me forth from the sanctuary in which my mind bestirs itself. What will become of me? Poverty does not frighten me. Were it not that beggars are imprisoned, insulted, despised, I would beg in order that I might be able to solve at my ease the problems by which my mind is occupied. But that sublime resignation, whereby I might emancipate my thought by setting it free from my body, would serve no purpose: one must have money again in order to try certain experiments. Except for that, I would have accepted the apparent poverty of the thinker who possesses heaven and earth at once. To be great in poverty, it is enough never to debase one's self. The man who struggles and who suffers while marching



on toward a noble goal, certainly presents a fine spectacle; but who feels strong enough to struggle here? One scales cliffs, one cannot always stamp in the mud. Here, everything tends to discourage the flight in a straight line of a mind aiming toward the future. I should not be afraid of myself in a cave in the desert, but I am afraid of myself here. In the desert, I should be alone with myself, with nothing to distract my thoughts; here, man feels a multitude of desires which degrade him. When you have gone abroad musing and preoccupied, the voice of the beggar calls you back to the midst of this world of hunger and thirst, by asking alms. One needs money to walk in the street. One's organs, constantly fatigued by trifles, are never at rest. The poet's nervous system is subjected to incessant shocks, and that which should be his glory becomes his torment: his imagination is his most cruel enemy. Here, the wounded workman, the poor woman in childbirth, the prostitute who falls sick, the abandoned child, the infirm old man, yes, vice and crime itself find a refuge and fostering care; whereas the world is pitiless to the inventor, to every man who meditates. Here, everything must needs have an immediate, tangible result; people sneer at attempts, resultless at first, which may lead to the grandest discoveries, and they have no respect for the constant and profound study which demands a prolonged concentration of one's powers. The State might consent to pay for talent, as it pays for the bayonet; but it trembles lest it be deceived by the



man of intellect, as if genius could be counterfeited for long! Ah! my dear uncle, when the conventual solitudes, situated at the foot of high mountains beneath green and silent forests, were destroyed, should not hospitals have been built for those suffering minds which by a single thought give birth to the progress of nations, or which pave the way for new and fruitful developments of a science?"

"September 20.

"Study brought me hither, as you know; I found here men of genuine, in most instances of marvellous learning; but the absence of unity in their scientific labor nullifies almost all their efforts. Neither teaching nor science has a leader. At the Muséum, you will hear a professor demonstrating that the professor on Rue Saint-Jacques has told you a lot of absurd nonsense. The man at the Ecole de Médecine scores his brother at the Collège de France. On my arrival, I went to hear an old academician who told five hundred young men that Corneille was a sturdy and noble-minded genius, Racine elegiac and gentle, Molière inimitable, Voltaire eminently clever and witty, Bossuet and Pascal desperately strong. A professor of philosophy becomes illustrious by explaining that Plato is Plato. Another writes the history of words without thinking of ideas. This one interprets *Æschylus*, that one proves triumphantly that the Commons were the Commons and nothing else. These novel and luminous discoveries, paraphrased for a few hours,

constitute the exalted teaching which is supposed to cause one to take giant strides forward in human knowledge. If the government had a mind, I should suspect it of being afraid of the real superiorities which, if once awakened, would place society under the yoke of an intelligent power. Nations would go too far and too swiftly; so the professors are instructed to make men idiots. How otherwise can we account for teaching without method, without a thought of the future? The Institute might be the supreme governing power of the moral and intellectual world; but it has recently been broken up by its constitution into separate academies. Thus, human learning marches without a guide, without system, and wanders hither and thither at random, having marked out no path for itself. This drifting, this uncertainty, prevails in politics as well as in education. In the order of nature, the methods are simple, the end is grand and marvellous; here, in education as in the government, the methods are vast, the end is inconsiderable. That force which, in nature, proceeds at a regular pace, and whose sum is constantly added to itself, that  $A$  plus  $A$  which produces everything, is destructive in society. The politics of the present day places human forces in opposition to one another in order to neutralize them, instead of combining them so that they may act together to some useful end. Glancing at the history of Europe, from Cæsar to Constantine, from Constantine the Little to Attila the Great, from the Huns to Charlemagne, from Charlemagne to

Leo X., from Leo X. to Philip II., from Philip II. to Louis XIV., from Venice to England, from England to Napoléon, from Napoléon to England, I can nowhere discover any continuity in politics, and its constant upheaval has resulted in no progress. Nations attest their grandeur by monuments, or their happiness by individual well-being. Are our modern monuments equal in value to the ancient ones? I doubt it. The arts which proceed directly from the individual, the productions of genius or of the hand, have gained little. Lucullus's pleasures were fully as desirable as those of Samuel Bernard, Beaujon, or the King of Bavaria. In short, human longevity has lost. Thus to the man who chooses to be frank, nothing has changed, man is the same: force is still his only law, success his only test of wisdom. Jesus Christ, Mahomet, Luther, simply gave a slightly different color to the circle in which the youthful nations performed their evolutions. No policy interfered to prevent civilization, its wealth, its manners, its contract between the strong against the weak, its ideas and its debauchery, from going from Memphis to Tyre, from Tyre to Balbeck, from Tedmor to Carthage, from Carthage to Rome, from Rome to Constantinople, from Constantinople to Venice, from Venice to Spain, from Spain to England, leaving no trace of Memphis, of Tyre, of Carthage, of Rome, of Venice, of Madrid. The spirit of those great bodies has taken flight. Not one was saved from the ruin, not one divined this axiom: *When the effect produced is no longer*

*related to the cause, disorganization ensues.* The most subtle genius can discover no bond between these great social facts. No political theory has lived. Governments pass away like men, transmitting no useful information to their successors, and no system engenders a more perfect system than its predecessor. What are we to conclude concerning politics, when the government based upon God has perished in India and Egypt, when the government of the sword and the crown has passed away, when the government of a single man is dying, when the government of all has never succeeded in living, when no conception of intelligent force, applied to material interests, has been able to endure, and when everything is to be done anew to-day as at all periods in history when man has cried: 'I suffer!'—The Code, which is considered Napoléon's noblest work, is the most Draconian work within my knowledge. The parcelling out of territory carried to extremes, its principle being recognized in the Code by the provision for the equal distribution of property, is likely to result in the degradation of the nation and the death of the arts and sciences. When land is subdivided too much, it is laid down to grain and garden vegetables; forests, and consequently water-courses, disappear; there is an end to the breeding of horses or cattle. Means of attack as well as of resistance are lacking. Let an invasion come, the nation is emasculated, it has lost its great springs of action, it has lost its leaders. And such is the history of the deserts! Politics,

therefore, is a science without fixed principles, without any possible stability; it is the genius of the moment, the constant application of force according to the necessity of the day. The man who should look ahead two centuries would die on the public square, overwhelmed by the imprecations of the people, or else—and this seems to me a worse fate—would be scourged by the innumerable lashes of ridicule. Nations are individuals who are neither wiser nor stronger than man, and their destinies are the same. If we reflect upon one, are not our minds intent upon the other? Observing the spectacle of this society incessantly tormented in its basic principles no less than in its results, in its causes no less than in its action, and in which philanthropy is a magnificent error and progress an absurdity, I have acquired confirmation of this truth, that life is within us and not without; that to raise one's self above men in order to command them is simply the rôle of a school usher magnified; and that men who are strong enough to ascend to the level whence they can enjoy the spectacle of the worlds should not look down at their feet."

"November 4.

"Assuredly my mind is occupied with momentous thoughts, I am going forward to certain discoveries, an irresistible force draws me onward toward a light which began to shine very early in the darkness of my moral life; but what name can I give to the power which ties my hands, closes my mouth, and

leads me in a direction contrary to my vocation? I must leave Paris, bid adieu to the books in the libraries, to these beautiful centres of light, to these scholars, so good-natured, so accessible, to these young geniuses with whom I am in sympathy. What repels me? is it chance or is it Providence? The two ideas that those words represent are irreconcilable. If chance does not exist, we must subscribe to fatalism, or the forced co-ordination of things subjected to a general plan. Why, then, should we resist? If man is no longer free, what becomes of the framework of his moral character? And if he can fashion his own destiny, if he can by the exercise of his free-will arrest the progress of the general plan, what becomes of God? Why did I come here? If I examine myself, I know: I find within myself texts to develop; but in that case why do I possess vast faculties without the ability to make use of them? If my torture could serve as an example, I could understand it; but no, I suffer in obscurity. This result is as providential as the fate of the unknown flower which dies in the depths of an untrodden forest, before any mortal has smelt its fragrance or admired its brilliant coloring. Just as it exhales its perfume in solitude to no purpose, so do I, here in an attic, give birth to ideas which are never grasped. Last night I was eating bread and grapes at my window with a young doctor named Meyraux. We conversed like persons whom misery has made brothers, and I said to him:



“‘I am going away, you remain; take my ideas and develop them!’

“‘I cannot,’ he replied, with bitter melancholy, ‘my health is too weak to stand my work, and I shall die young, fighting against poverty.’

“We looked up at the sky, pressing each other’s hands. We became acquainted at the lectures on comparative anatomy and in the galleries of the Muséum, both of us led thither by the same study, the unity of geological structure. In his case, it was the presentiment of a genius sent to break out a new road through the wild land of the intellect; in mine, it was a deduction from a general theory. My idea is to determine the real relations which may exist between man and God. Is not that a necessity of the time? Unless armed with supreme certainty, it is impossible to put a curb upon these societies which the spirit of examination and discussion has unchained and which are crying aloud to-day: ‘Are you leading us in a path where we can walk without encountering abysses?’ You will ask me what relation comparative anatomy bears to a question of such serious import to the future of societies. Must we not be convinced that man is the end of all earthly means if we would ask ourselves if he is not himself the means to some end? If man is related to everything, is there nothing above him upon which he depends in his turn? If he is the goal of the unexplained transmutations which ascend to him, must he not be the bond between visible nature and an invisible nature? The action of the world is not utterly absurd,



it is directed to some end, and that end cannot be a social system constituted as ours is. There is a terrible hiatus between us and heaven. Under present conditions, we can neither always enjoy nor always suffer; would it not require an enormous change to arrive at paradise and hell, two conceptions apart from which God has no existence in the eyes of the masses? I know that some people have extricated themselves from the dilemma by inventing the soul; but I feel some repugnance to holding God jointly responsible for human cowardice, for our disenchantments, our disgust, our decadence. And then, how can we admit the existence within us of a divine principle over which a few glasses of rum can triumph? How can we conceive of immaterial faculties which matter can crush, whose exercise can be arrested by a grain of opium? How can we conceive that we shall continue to feel when we are stripped of the conditions of our sensibility? Why should God cease to be because substance has the thinking faculty? Are the presence of life in substance and its numberless variations, the result of its instincts, less readily explained than the results of thought? Is not the setting in motion of worlds sufficient evidence of God's existence, without involving ourselves in the absurdities engendered by our pride? Is not the fact that, after we have been put to the proof, we go from a mortal life to a better life, sufficient for a creature who is distinguished from other creatures only by a more perfect instinct? If there is no principle in morals which does not lead to an

absurdity or is not contradicted by evidence, is it not high time that we start on a quest for dogmas written in the depths of the nature of things? Must we not necessarily turn back philosophical learning? We pay but little heed to the alleged nothingness that preceded us, and we search the alleged nothingness that awaits us. We hold God responsible for the future and we do not call Him to account for the past. And yet it is as necessary to know whether we have any roots in the past as to know whether we are welded to the future. We have been deists or atheists on one side only. Is the world everlasting? Was the world created? We can conceive no mean term between these two propositions: one is false, the other is true; choose! Whatever be your choice, God, as our mind represents Him, must be shorn of a part of His majesty, which is equivalent to denying Him altogether. Assume the world to be everlasting: the conclusion is inevitable, God is subject to the world. Assume that the world was created: God is no longer possible. How could He have remained for a whole eternity in ignorance that He would at some time be moved to create the world? How could He have failed to know beforehand the results of His action? Whence did He take His essence? Necessarily from Himself. If the world issues from God, how can we admit the existence of evil? If evil has come out of good, you fall into an absurdity. If there is no evil, what becomes of societies and their laws? Pitfalls everywhere! everywhere an abyss for the reason! Thus the

whole science of society must be reconstructed. Listen, uncle: until some great genius shall have explained the evident inequality of intellects, the general meaning of mankind, the word *God* will constantly be on the defensive and society will rest upon shifting sands. The secret of the different moral zones through which man passes will be found in the analysis of animal nature as a whole. Animal nature has hitherto been studied only in its differences, and not in its resemblances; in its organic appearances, and not in its faculties. The animal faculties are perfected from generation to generation, according to laws still to be investigated. These faculties correspond to the forces which give expression to them, and these forces are essentially material, divisible. Material faculties! Think of joining those two words! It is a question no less difficult of solution than that of the imparting of motion to matter,—a bottomless pit still unexplored, whose difficulties were avoided rather than solved by Newton's theory. Indeed, the constant combination of light with everything that lives on earth demands a new examination of the globe. The same animal is entirely different in the Torrid Zone, in the Indies, and in the North. Between the vertical and oblique solar rays is developed a nature dissimilar, yet similar, which, while based on the same principle, produces entirely different results in the two cases. The phenomenon that startles our eyes when we compare the butterflies of Bengal with the butterflies of

Europe in the zoölogical world, is even more stupendous in the moral world. To produce Columbus, Raphael, Napoléon, Laplace, or Beethoven, we must have a definite facial angle, a certain number of cerebral folds; the sunless valley produces the *crétin*; draw your own conclusions. What is the explanation of these differences, due to the more or less favorable distillation of light in man? These great, suffering human masses, more or less active, more or less adequately fed, more or less enlightened, constitute difficulties to be dealt with, difficulties which cry out against God. Why in extreme joy do we long to leave the earth? why the longing to rise higher which has seized and will seize every creature? Motion is a great soul whose alliance with matter is as difficult to explain as the evolution of thought in man. To-day, learning is a unit; it is impossible to touch politics without turning one's mind to moral science, and moral science is connected with all scientific questions. It seems to me that we are on the eve of a great battle of humanity; the forces are aligned, but I see no general—"

" November 25.

"Believe me, my dear uncle, it is very hard to turn one's back without sorrow on the life for which one is fitted. I return to Blois with a horrible sinking of the heart; I shall die there, carrying with me useful truths. No selfish interest debases my regret. Glory is naught to him who believes that he may depart for a loftier sphere. I have no affection

for the two syllables *Lam* and *bert*; when uttered over my grave, whether with veneration or heedlessly, they will have no effect upon my ultimate destiny. I feel that I am strong, overflowing with energy, and I might become a power on earth; I feel within me a life so aglow with light that it could impart animation to a world, and yet I am confined within a sort of mineral, as perhaps the colors are which you admire on the neck of the birds of the Indian peninsula. To make this world over, one must see and embrace it all; but those men who have thus embraced and recast it heretofore, have always begun by being a wheel in the machinery. And I should be crushed. To Mahomet the sword, to Jesus the Cross, to me an obscure death; at Blois to-morrow, and a few days later in a coffin.

“Do you know why I have gone back to Swedenborg, after studying all religions thoroughly, and, by a perusal of all the works which patient Germany, England, and France have published within sixty years, have proven to my own satisfaction the profound truth of my youthful observations concerning the Bible? Swedenborg clearly sums up all religions, or rather the single religion of mankind. Although the different religions have adopted an infinite variety of forms, neither their meaning nor their metaphysical construction has ever varied. In short, mankind has had but one religion. Sivaism, Vishnuism, Brahminism, the first three forms of human worship, born at Thibet, in the valley of the Indus, and on the vast plains of the Ganges, ended their wars, a

few thousand years before Christ, by the adoption of the Hindoo Trimurti. The Trimurti is our Trinity. This dogma is the source of Magianism in Persia, of the African religions and Mosaism in Egypt, of Cabirism and the Græco-Roman polytheism. While these radiations from the Trimurti were adapting the myths of Asia to the imaginations of each country to which they journeyed in the custody of sages whom men transformed into demigods,—Mithra, Bacchus, Hermes, Hercules, etc.,—Buddha, the famous reformer of the three primitive religions, made his appearance in India and founded there his Church, which still numbers two hundred millions more faithful subjects than the churches of Christ, and to which the far-reaching wills of Christ and Confucius came for sustenance. Christianity unfurled its banner. Later, Mahomet melted down Mosaism and Christianity, the Bible and the Gospels, into a single book, the Koran, wherein he adapted them to the genius of the Arabs. Lastly, Swedenborg took from Magianism, Brahminism, Buddhism, and Christian mysticism all that those great religions have in common, all that they contain that is true and divine, and supported their doctrines with what we may call mathematical reasoning. To the man who plunges into those religious streams, whose founders are not all known, it is proven that Zoroaster, Moses, Buddha, Confucius, Jesus Christ, and Swedenborg had the same basic principles and aimed at the same end. But Swedenborg, the last of all, will be, perhaps, the Buddha of the North. Obscure and

diffuse as his books may be, the elements of a magnificent social conception are to be found therein. His theocracy is sublime, and his religion is the only one which a superior mind can admit. He alone brings us in touch with God, gives us a thirst for Him; he has freed God's majesty from the swaddling-clothes in which other human religions have entangled it; he has left Him where He is, causing His innumerable creations and His creatures to revolve around Him by successive transformations which constitute a future more immediate, more natural, than the eternity of the Catholics. He has purged God of the blame which loving hearts have heaped upon Him because of the never-ending vengeance He is said to exact for sins of an instant—a system devoid of justice and kindness. Every man can ascertain whether he is to enter into another life, and whether this world has a meaning. I propose to try the experiment. My attempt may save the world as well as the Cross of Jerusalem or the sword of Mecca. Both are sons of the desert. Of the thirty-three years of Jesus's life, only nine are known; His silent life paved the way for His glorious life. I, too, need the desert!"





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Despite the difficulties of the undertaking, I have deemed it my duty to attempt to describe Lambert's youth, that hidden life to which I am indebted for the only pleasant hours and the only agreeable memories of my boyhood. Outside of those two years, I have had naught but trouble and weariness. Although happiness came to me later, my happiness was always incomplete.—I have been very diffuse, I doubt not; but, without obtaining a conception of the scope of Lambert's heart and brain,—two words which imperfectly represent the infinite developments of his *inward life*,—it would be almost impossible to understand the second part of his intellectual history, which was unknown alike to the world and to myself, but whose mysterious dénouement developed in my presence for a few hours. Those who have not already let this book fall from their hands will understand, I trust, the events which remain for me to narrate, and which form in some sense a second existence of that creature; why should I not say, of that *creation*, in whom everything was destined to be exceptional, even his end?

When Louis returned to Blois, his uncle exerted himself to divert his mind. But the poor priest was like a veritable leper in that devout city. No one was anxious to receive a revolutionist, a priest who

had taken the oath. His society consisted, therefore, of a few persons who held what were then called liberal, patriotic, or constitutional opinions, to whose houses he betook himself for his game of whist or boston. At the first house in which his uncle introduced him, Louis met a young woman whose social position forced her to remain in that circle at which the people in the first society looked askance, although her fortune was such as to make it probable that she would have no difficulty later in finding a husband among the provincial aristocracy. Mademoiselle Pauline de Villenoix was the sole heiress of the wealth amassed by her grandfather, a Jew named Salomon, who, in contempt of the customs of his nation, had married a Catholic in his old age. He had a son who was brought up in his mother's communion. At his mother's death, young Salomon purchased what was called in those days a *savonnette à vilain*,\* and procured the erection into a barony of the estate of Villenoix, the name of which he assumed. He died unmarried, but leaving a natural daughter to whom he bequeathed the greater part of his fortune, notably the estate of Villenoix. One of his uncles, Monsieur Joseph Salomon, was appointed by Monsieur de Villenoix guardian of his daughter. This old Jew had conceived such an affection for his ward, that he seemed to be prepared to make very great sacrifices in order to arrange a distinguished marriage for her. But Mademoiselle de Villenoix's birth and the prejudices

\* An office purchased with a view to obtaining a patent of nobility.

against Jews which were still rampant in the provinces made it impossible for her, notwithstanding her own fortune and her guardian's, to obtain admission to that very exclusive social circle which styles itself, with or without right, the nobility. However, Monsieur Joseph Salomon declared that, failing a provincial clodhopper, his ward should go to Paris to select a husband from among the liberal or monarchical peers; and, so far as her happiness was concerned, the worthy guardian thought that he could assure that by the provisions of the marriage-contract.

Mademoiselle de Villenoix was at this time twenty years old. Her remarkable beauty and the charms of her mind were less equivocal guarantees of her happiness than all those afforded by wealth. Her features presented the Jewish type of beauty in its purest form: those oval outlines, so full and virginal, which have an indefinable touch of the ideal, and exhale the joys of the Orient, the unchangeable azure of its sky, the splendors of its soil, and the fabulous richness of its life. She had lovely eyes veiled by long lids fringed with heavy, drooping lashes. Biblical innocence shone upon her forehead. Her complexion was of the soft whiteness of the Levite's robe. She was ordinarily silent and meditative; but her gestures, her movements, attested a reserved grace, just as her words bore witness to the gentle and caressing mind of the woman. And yet she had not that dewy freshness, that purplish coloring which embellishes a woman's cheeks

during her years of heedlessness. Brownish shades, blended with faint traces of red, took the place of high coloring in her face and indicated an energetic character, a nervous irritability which many men do not like to find in a woman, but which, to some, are tokens of a sensitive chastity and of dignified passions.

As soon as Lambert saw Mademoiselle de Ville-noix, he divined the angel beneath that woman's shape. The prolific faculties of his mind, his tendency to ecstatic meditation, everything within him was submerged by a boundless love, by the first love of the young man, a passion powerful enough in other men, but certain to be carried to an incalculable height by the keenness of his understanding, by the nature of his mental processes, and by his mode of life. That passion was an abyss into which the poor fellow tossed everything, an abyss into which one's mind fears to descend, since his, flexible and strong as it was, was hopelessly lost. Thenceforward everything is shrouded in mystery, for everything took place in that moral world which is a closed book to most men and whose laws were revealed to him, perhaps, to his undoing.

When chance brought me into relations with his uncle, the goodman took me to the room occupied by Lambert at the time of which I write. I desired to find there some traces of his labors, if he had left any. Among a mass of papers whose confusion was respected by the old man, with that exquisite refinement of sorrow which distinguishes the old, I found several letters too illegible

## LAMBERT MEETS MILE. DE VILLENNOIX

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to have been delivered to Mademoiselle de Villenoix. My former familiarity with Lambert's handwriting enabled me, with the assistance of time, to decipher the hieroglyphics of that stenographic system, born of impatience and the frenzy of passion. Carried away by his feeling, he wrote without heeding the incompleteness of the lines, which went off too slowly to express his thoughts. He must have been compelled to copy his shapeless scrawls in which the lines often ran together; but perhaps, too, he feared lest he might not cloak his ideas in sufficiently deceptive forms, and in the beginning made two drafts of his love-letters. However that may be, it required all the fervor of my veneration for his memory and the species of fanaticism which an undertaking of that sort inspires, to decipher and formulate the meaning of the five letters which follow. These papers, which I preserve with something very like piety, are the only material evidence of his ardent passion. Mademoiselle de Villenoix has undoubtedly destroyed the letters which were actually sent to her, eloquent records of the madness she caused. The first of these letters, evidently what is called a rough draft, bore witness, by its form and its length, to the hesitations, the tremors of the heart, the innumerable fears aroused by the longing to please, the changes of expression and the uncertainty as to the choice to be made among all the thoughts which assail a young man who is writing his first love-letter: a letter which one always remembers, of which each sentence is

the result of a reverie, of which each word gives rise to long periods of contemplation, and in which the most unbridled passion realizes the necessity of assuming a most modest bearing, and, like the giant who stoops to enter a hut, becomes humble and submissive in order not to alarm a maiden's heart. Never did antiquary handle his palimpsests with greater respect than that with which I set about studying and reconstructing these mutilated monuments of a sorrow and a joy that are sacred to those who have known the same sorrow and the same joy.

## I

"MADEMOISELLE,

"When you have read this letter, if indeed you do read it, my life will be in your hands; for I love you, and with me the hope of being loved is life. I know not whether other men, in speaking to you of themselves, have misused the words which I use to describe to you the state of my heart; but I pray you to believe in the truth of my expressions; they are feeble, but sincere. Perhaps it is ill-advised to declare my love thus. Yes, the voice of my heart advised me to wait in silence until my passion should have touched your heart, so that I might devour it if its mute demonstrations should offend you; or express it more chastely than by words, if I should find favor in your eyes. But, after listening for a long time to the subtle arguments at which a young heart takes fright, I obey, in writing to you, the

instinct which extorts useless shrieks from the dying. I needed all my courage to impose silence on the pride of misfortune and to pass the barriers which prejudices erect between you and myself. I have been forced to strangle many thoughts in order to love you despite your wealth! If I write to you, I must defy the scorn which women often reserve for a passion whose declaration is accepted simply as an additional bit of flattery. So one must fly with all one's strength toward happiness, must be attracted to the life of love as a plant is attracted to the light, must have been very unhappy, to overcome the torture, the agony, of those secret deliberations in which reason proves to us in a thousand ways the sterility of the longings concealed in the depths of our hearts, and in which, nevertheless, hope leads us to dare everything. I was happy to admire you in silence, I was so completely absorbed in contemplation of your lovely mind, that when I looked at you I hardly imagined anything beyond that. No, I should not have dared to speak to you even yet, had I not heard it said that you were going away. What torture a single word brought upon me! My grief made clear to me at last the extent of my attachment to you—it is beyond bounds. Mademoiselle, you will never know, at least I hope that you will never know, the pang caused by the fear of losing the only joy which has opened for us on this earth, the only one which has cast a gleam of light into the obscurity of our wretchedness. Yesterday, I felt that my life was no longer in me, but in you. To me, there is now

but one woman in the world, as there is but a single thought in my heart. I dare not tell you to what alternative my love for you reduces me. As I wish to owe you to yourself alone, I must avoid presenting myself before you accompanied by all the pomp of poverty: for it is more powerful than the pomp of fortune upon noble souls. Therefore I shall say nothing to you of many things. Yes, my conception of love is too beautiful to mar it by thoughts foreign to its nature. If my mind is worthy of yours, if my life is pure, your heart will feel a generous assurance of the fact and you will understand me! It is a part of man's destiny to offer himself to her who causes him to believe in happiness; but it is your right, I know, to reject the most genuine sentiment if it is not in accord with the confused voices of your heart. If the fate you impose upon me shall prove to be contrary to my hopes, mademoiselle, I appeal to the refined delicacy of your virgin heart as well as to the subtle compassion of your sex. On my knees I implore you to burn my letter, forget all that I have written! Do not make sport of a respectful sentiment too deeply imprinted on my heart ever to be effaced. Break my heart, but do not rend it! May this outpouring of my first love, of a pure and youthful love, be heard only in a pure and youthful heart! may it die there as a prayer is buried forever in God's bosom! I owe you a debt of gratitude: I have passed delightful hours gazing at you and abandoning myself to the sweetest meditations of my whole life; do not, therefore, crown this

long but ephemeral bliss with a girlish jest. Content yourself with not replying to me. I shall know how to interpret your silence, and you will see me no more. If it be my doom always to know what happiness might be mine, and always to lose it; if, like the banished angel, I am to retain the power of appreciating divine delights but to be always fast bound in a world of sorrow, why, I will keep the secret of my love with the secret of my wretchedness. Adieu! Yes, I entrust you to God, whom I will implore in your behalf, to whom I will pray to make your life happy; for, even though I be driven from your heart, which I have entered by stealth and without your knowledge, I will never leave you. Otherwise, what would be the value of the sacred words of this letter, my first and, it may be, my last prayer? If I should cease for a single day to think of you, to love you, whether happy or unhappy, should I not deserve my anguish?"

## II

"You are not going away! Then I am beloved! I, a poor, obscure creature! My dear Pauline, you cannot conceive the power of the glance on which I pin my faith, the glance you bestowed upon me to inform me that I had been chosen by you, young and fair as you are, with the whole world at your feet. To enable you to comprehend my happiness, I should have to tell you the story of my life. If



you had rejected me, all would have been over for me. I had suffered too much. Yes, my love, that beneficent, magnificent love was a supreme effort to attain the happy life to which my heart aspired, a heart already crushed by fruitless labors, consumed by fears which make me doubt myself, gnawed by despairing thoughts which have often well-nigh persuaded me to die. Ah! no one on earth knows the terror which my fatal imagination causes me. It often raises me to the skies, and suddenly lets me fall to earth from a prodigious height. Secret outbursts of force, a few infrequent, secret manifestations of peculiar clearness of vision, lead me to think sometimes that I can do great things. At such times, I envelop the world with my thoughts, I mould it, I shape it, I penetrate its mysteries, I understand it or think that I understand it; but I suddenly awake all alone, and find myself in profound darkness, a poor, feeble creature; I forget the gleams of light I have just seen, I am entirely without resource; especially do I long for a heart in which I can take refuge! That misfortune of my mental life has a like result on my physical existence. The peculiar nature of my mind delivers me over defenceless to the joys of happiness, as to the terrible gleams of reflection which destroy those joys by analyzing them. Gifted with the unpleasant faculty of viewing obstacles and triumphs with the same lucidity, I am happy or unhappy according to my belief of the moment. For instance, when I met you, I had a presentiment of an angelic nature, I

breathed freely in an atmosphere soothing to my burning breast, I heard within me that voice which never deceives, and which told me of a happy life to come; but, detecting also all the barriers that separated us, I realized for the first time the prejudices of the world; I understood them in all their pettiness, and the obstacles terrified me even more than the prospect of happiness elated me: I instantly felt that terrible reaction whereby my expansive mind was forced back upon itself, the smile which you had brought to my lips changed to a contraction of bitter sorrow, and I tried to remain cool while my blood, excited by a thousand conflicting feelings, boiled fiercely. At last I recognized that stinging sensation to which twenty-three years of repressed sighs and abortive effusions have not yet accustomed me. But, Pauline, the glance by which you made known my happiness to me has suddenly rekindled my life and changed my wretchedness to bliss. I would now that I had suffered more. My love suddenly became immeasurable. My heart was a vast tract which lacked the blessings of the sunlight, and your glance abruptly flooded it with light. Dear Providence! you will be all in all to me, a poor orphan with no other kindred than my uncle. You will be my whole family, as you already are my only treasure and the whole world to me. Did you not throw at my feet all the wealth of mankind, with that chaste, that generous, that timid glance? Yes, you have given me incredible confidence and audacity. Now I can attempt anything.

I had returned to Blois utterly discouraged. Five years of study in Paris had shown me the world in the likeness of a prison. I conceived new branches of science in their entirety and dared not mention them. Glory seemed to me a sort of charlatanism with which a truly great mind should have naught to do. My ideas, therefore, could not gain a hearing except under the patronage of a man bold enough to mount the tribune of the press and speak in thunder tones to the idiots he despises. I lacked that courage. Crushed by the judgments of that mob, I went my way, despairing of ever being listened to by them. I was both too low and too high! I devoured my thoughts as others devour their humiliations. I had reached the point of despising knowledge, of blaming it because it added nothing to real happiness. But, since yesterday, everything is changed. For you I covet the laurels of glory and all the triumphs of talent. I wish, when I lay my head upon your knees, to cause the eyes of the world to rest thereon, even as I wish to concentrate all ideas, all powers, in my love! The widest renown is a treasure which no power other than genius can create. Ah! well, I can, if I choose, make for you a bed of laurel wreaths. And, if the peaceful triumphs of learning should not content you, I carry within me the keen blade of speech, I shall be able to run swiftly through an honorable and ambitious career, while others drag themselves slowly along! Speak, Pauline; I will be whatever you wish me to be. My iron will is equal to anything.

I am beloved! Armed with that thought, should not a man force everything to bend before him? Everything is possible to him whose will embraces everything. Be thou the prize of success, and I enter the lists to-morrow. To obtain a glance like that you bestowed on me I would leap the deepest of abysses. You have enabled me to understand the fabulous exploits of chivalry and the most improbable tales of the *Thousand and One Nights*. I believe now in the most fanciful exaggerations of love and in the success of all that prisoners undertake to regain their liberty. You have awakened a thousand virtues that lay dormant in my being: patience, resignation, all the forces of the heart, all the powers of the mind. I live through you, and, oh! blissful thought! for you. Now, everything in this life has a meaning to me. I understand everything, even the vanities of wealth. I surprise myself pouring all the pearls of the Indies at your feet; I delight my soul by fancying that I see you lying among the loveliest flowers, or on the softest of soft stuffs, and all the splendors of the world seem to me hardly worthy of you, in whose favor I would that I might control the harmonies and the beams lavished by the harps of the Seraphim and by the stars in heaven. A poor, studious poet! my words offer you treasures which I do not possess, while I can give you naught but my heart, where you will reign forever. Therein lies all my wealth. But is there no worth in everlasting gratitude, in a smile whose expression will be constantly varied by unchangeable

happiness, in the unremitting endeavor of my love to divine the desires of your loving heart? Has not a heavenly glance told us that we can always understand each other? Now I have a prayer to offer up every night to God, a prayer devoted to you: 'Grant that my Pauline may be happy!' But in that case you will fill my whole life full, as you already fill my heart. Adieu! I can entrust you to none but God!"

### III

"Tell me, Pauline, if I displeased you in any way yesterday? Abjure that pride of the heart which makes one endure in secret the pain caused by a beloved being! Scold me! Since yesterday, a vague, indefinable dread of having offended you has shadowed with sadness that heart-life which you have made so sweet and so rich. The slightest veil suspended between two hearts often becomes as a wall of brass. There are no trivial crimes in love! If you possess all the genius of that beautiful sentiment, you must feel all its pangs, and we must always be on our guard lest we hurt each other by some hasty word. Doubtless, my dearest treasure, the fault is mine, if fault there be. I do not make the proud claim that I understand a woman's heart in all the developments of its affection, in all the charms of its self-sacrificing devotion; but I shall always try to divine the true value of whatever you

shall choose to reveal to me of the secrets of your heart. Speak, answer me speedily! The melancholy induced by the feeling that we have done wrong is horrible, it invades our lives and makes us doubt everything. I sat all the morning on the side of the sunken road, watching the towers of Villenoix and not daring to go to our hedge. If you knew all that I saw in my fancy! what depressing phantoms passed before me, beneath that lowering sky whose cold look increased the gloom of my mental state. I had presentiments of evil. I was afraid that I should not make you happy. I must tell you everything, dear Pauline. There are moments when the mind which animates me seems to withdraw from me. I am abandoned, as it were, by that which constitutes my force. At such times, everything weighs me down, every fibre of my body becomes inert, every sense is relaxed, my eyes grow dim, my tongue stiffens, my imagination languishes, my desires perish, and only my physical power endures. If you should then appear before me in all the glory of your beauty, if you should lavish upon me your sweetest smiles and your most loving words, there would arise an evil power which would blind me, and distort the most enchanting melody into discordant shrieks. At such moments,—at all events I so believe,—there rises before me some reasoning spirit who reveals to me the nothingness beneath the best assured wealth. That pitiless demon mows down all the flowers, sneers at the sweetest sentiment, saying to me: ‘Well, what then?’—He



degrades the fairest work by showing me its moving principle, and lays bare to me the mechanism of things while concealing their harmonious results. At those terrible moments when the evil angel takes possession of my being, when the divine light is obscured in my soul, although I know not why, I am sorely depressed and I suffer; I would like to be deaf and dumb; I long for death, seeing therein a prospect of rest. These hours of doubt and anxiety are, perhaps, necessary; at all events, they teach me to have no pride after the bursts of energy which have borne me up to heaven, where I garner ideas with overflowing hands; for it is always after I have roamed a long while through the vast fields of intellectual activity, after luminous meditations, that I fall, weary and overdone, into this purgatory. At such a time, my love, a woman would be certain to doubt my affection, at all events she might well do so. Being often capricious, indisposed, or melancholy, she will demand the boundless caresses of resourceful affection, and I shall have no glance to comfort her! I am ashamed to confess, Pauline, that at such times I could weep with you, but that nothing could extort a smile from me. And yet a woman finds in her love strength to impose silence on her grief! For her child, and for the man she loves, she can laugh even while she suffers. And can I not for you, Pauline, imitate the sublime delicacy of woman? Since yesterday, I have doubted myself. If I can have offended you once, if I have failed to understand you, I tremble lest I may often



be carried outside of our happy sphere by my fatal demon. Suppose that I were to have many of these horrible moments, suppose that my unbounded love should fail to redeem the wretched hours of my life, suppose that I were destined to remain as I now am?—Fatal questions! power is a gift of evil omen, assuming that what I feel within me is power. Pauline, leave me, abandon me! I prefer to suffer all the ills of life rather than the pain of knowing that you are unhappy through me. But perhaps the demon has acquired so much power over my mind, simply because he has not yet found beside me a pair of soft, white hands to drive him away. No woman has ever poured out upon me the balm of her consolation, and I cannot be sure that when Love, in those moments of weariness, flutters his wings over my head, he may not bestow new strength upon my heart. Perhaps this carking melancholy is the result of my solitude, one of the pangs of the abandoned soul, which groans and pays for its treasures by unknown pain. To trifling joys, trifling sorrows; to boundless happiness, unheard-of ills. What a judgment! If it be true, must not we, too, shudder for ourselves, for we are supernaturally happy? If nature sells us things according to their value, into what bottomless pit shall we fall? Ah! the most blessed lovers are they who die together in the full bloom of their youth and their love! What sadness is this! Does my heart forebode an unhappy future? I examine myself and ask myself if there is anything in me which should cause you

the slightest anxiety. Perhaps I love you with a selfish love. Perhaps I shall bring upon your dear head a burden more trying than my love is sweet to your heart. If there is within me some inexorable power which I obey, if I am destined to curse when you clasp your hands to pray, if some depressing thought engrosses me when I would like to throw myself at your feet to play with you like a child, will you not be jealous of that exacting and capricious genius? Do you understand, heart of mine, that I am afraid of not being all in all to you, that I would gladly renounce all the sceptres, all the palms of glory in the world, to make of you my everlasting thought; to see in our blissful love a beautiful life and a beautiful poem; to cast therein my whole mind and engulf all my strength, and to demand from each passing hour the joys that it owes us?— But, lo! my love-memories return in a dense throng, the clouds of depression are scattering. Adieu! I leave you, that I may be more wholly yours. My dearest heart, I await a line, a word, which will restore peace to my heart. Let me know if I really saddened my Pauline, or if some equivocal expression of her face misled me. I would not like to have to reproach myself, after a life of happiness, with having gone to you without a smile overflowing with love, without a honeyed word. Distress the woman I love! to my mind, Pauline, it is a crime. Tell me the truth, do not invent some generous falsehood, but divest your pardon of all cruelty.”

## FRAGMENT

“Is such a single-hearted attachment happiness? Yes; for years of suffering would be too little to pay for one hour of love. Yesterday, your evident depression passed into my heart as swiftly as a shadow is projected. Were you sad, or were you in pain? I suffered keenly. Whence came that chagrin? Write me quickly. Why have I not divined? Are we not yet completely one in thought? I ought to feel your pains and your sorrows at a distance of two leagues or a thousand. I shall not consider that I love you so long as my life is not so closely bound to yours that we have the same life, the same heart, the same thoughts. I must be wherever you are, see what you see, feel what you feel, and follow you in thought. Did not I know first of all that your carriage had been overturned and that you were hurt? But that day I had not really left you at all, I saw you all the time. When my uncle asked me why I turned pale, I said: ‘Mademoiselle de Ville-noix has just had a fall!’—That being so, why could I not read your mind yesterday? Were you trying to conceal from me the cause of your unhappiness? And yet I thought that I could see that you had made some efforts in my behalf to conciliate the redoubtable Salomon, who makes my blood run cold. That man is not of our heaven. Why do you insist that our happiness, which in nowise resembles that of other people, must conform to the laws of society? But I love too dearly the innumerable shades of your

modesty, your religious feeling, your superstitions, not to obey your slightest caprices. Whatever you do must be right; nothing can be purer than your thought, even as nothing can be lovelier than your features whereon your divine soul is reflected. I shall await your letter before I go to obtain the blissful moment which you grant me. Ah! if you knew how the turrets make my heart beat, when I see them at last, edged with light by the moon, our friend, our only confidant!"

#### IV

"Farewell to glory, farewell to the future, farewell to the life of which I dreamed! Now, my best beloved, it is my glory to be thine, to be worthy of thee; my future consists wholly in the hope of seeing thee; and my life is to remain at thy feet, to lie beneath thy glances, to breathe freely in the heavenly atmosphere thou hast created for me. All my powers, all my thoughts, henceforth belong to thee, to thee who hast said to me the intoxicating words: 'I would share thy sorrows!' Would it not be robbing love of joys, happiness of precious moments, thy divine heart of fond sentiments, to give hours to study, ideas to the world, poetic thoughts to poets? No, no, dear life of mine, I intend to reserve everything for thee, to bring to thee all the flowers of my mind. Is there anything in the treasures of the earth and the intellect beautiful enough, splendid enough, to honor a heart so rich and so pure as thine,

to which sometimes I venture to ally my own? Yes, sometimes, I am vainglorious enough to believe that I can love as well as thou dost love. But no, thou art an *angel-woman*: there will always be more charm in the expression of thy feelings, more melody in thy voice, more fascination in thy smiles, more purity in thy glances, than in mine. Aye, let me believe that thou art a creature of a loftier sphere than that on which I dwell; thou wilt have the glory of having descended from it, I that of having deserved thee, and it may be that thou wilt not have demeaned thyself in coming to me, poor and unfortunate as I am. Yes, if a woman's happiest refuge is a heart that is wholly hers, thou wilt always reign supreme in mine. No thought, no act, will ever sully this heart, a blessed sanctuary, so long as thou choosest to dwell therein; but wilt thou not dwell there forever? Didst thou not say to me those precious words: *Now and forever!* ET NUNC ET SEMPER! I have carved beneath thy portrait those words of the ritual, worthy of thee even as they are worthy of God. He is *now and forever*, as my love will be. No, no, I shall never exhaust that which is immense, infinite, without bounds; and such is the sentiment that I feel within me for thee; I have divined its immeasurable extent as we divine space, by measuring a fragment. Thus I have found ineffable enjoyment, whole hours full of voluptuous meditations, in recalling a single one of thy gestures, or the intonations of a single sentence. So that memories will be born under whose weight I

shall succumb, if the memory of a single happy hour of familiar converse makes me weep for joy, penetrates and softens my heart, and becomes an inexhaustible source of happiness. To love is the life of angels! It seems to me that I shall never exhaust the pleasure which I feel in gazing upon thee! That pleasure, the most modest of all pleasures, although I never have sufficient time for it, has made me familiar with the never-ending contemplation of the Seraphim and the spirits of the blessed, in God's presence: nothing is more natural, if there emanates from His essence a light so fruitful in novel sentiments as the light of thine eyes, thine imposing brow, thy lovely countenance, the divine image of thy soul; the soul, that other self whose pure, imperishable form makes our love immortal. I would that there were some language other than that which I am using, to express the nascent ecstasy of my love; but, if there be one which we have invented, if our glances are living words, surely we must see each other in order to hear with the eyes those questions and replies of the heart, so vivid, so penetrating, that thou saidst to me one evening: 'Hush!' when I did not speak. Dost thou remember, dear life?—When I am far from thee, in the dark shadows of absence, am I not compelled to employ human words, too feeble to express divine sensations? at all events, words serve to indicate the furrows they trace in our minds, as the word God imperfectly sums up our conceptions of that mysterious essence. And yet, notwithstanding the

learning and the infinite capabilities of language, I have found nothing in its forms adapted to describe the blissful embrace by which my life is blended with thine when I think of thee. And then with what word am I to conclude when I cease to write to thee, but do not, because I cease to write to thee, leave thee? What is the meaning of 'adieu,' if not to die? But is death an adieu? Would not my soul be more closely united to thine in death? O my eternal thought! lately, upon my knees, I offered thee my heart and my life; what fresh flowers of sentiment, which I have not given thee, can I now find in my heart? Would it not be simply sending thee a fragment of what thou dost already possess entirely? Art not thou my future? How keenly I regret the past! I would that I might give to thee the years which no longer belong to us, and enthrone thee in them as thou art enthroned in my present life! But what matters that part of my life when I knew thee not! It would be as nothing, had I not been so unhappy."

#### FRAGMENT

"Beloved angel, what a lovely evening was last evening. What treasures in thy dear heart! is thy love inexhaustible, then, like mine? Each word brought me a new joy, and each glance increased its depth. The placid expression of thy face made the horizon of our thoughts boundless. Yes, all was then as infinite as the sky, as soft as its azure. The refinement of thine adored features was reflected by



I know not what magical process, in thy graceful movements, in thy pretty gestures. Well, I knew that thou wert all grace and all love, but I knew not the diversity of thy charms. Everything combined to counsel me to attempt those voluptuous solicitations, to impel me to beg those first favors which a woman always refuses, doubtless to allow them to be stolen from her. But no, dear heart of my life, thou wilt never know beforehand what thou mayst grant to my love, and thou wilt give thyself, unwittingly perhaps! Thou art true, and obeyest naught but thy heart. How perfectly the sweet tones of thy voice blended with the soft harmonies of the pure air and the tranquil skies! Not a bird's twitter, not a breath of wind; solitude and ourselves! The motionless foliage did not even tremble in the gorgeous hues of the setting sun, which are both light and shade. Thou didst feel those celestial poetic influences, thou in whom so many varying sentiments are united, and who didst so often raise thine eyes to Heaven in order not to answer me! Thou, proud and smiling, humble and despotic, giving thyself utterly in heart and thought, yet shrinking from the most timid of caresses! Dear coquetry of the heart! those priceless words, half stammered like the words of children,—words that were neither promises nor avowals, but left to love its fondest hopes, free from dread and torment,—those words still vibrate in my ears, sportive and frolicsome! What a chaste memory for this life! How gayly all the flowers bloomed which are born

in the depths of the soul, and which a trifle may wither, but which everything then served to animate and fructify ! So it will always be, will it not, my beloved ? When I recall this morning the fresh, keen joys which sprang to life at that moment, I feel in my soul a happiness which leads me to conceive love as an ocean of sensations never ending, always new, wherein one plunges with increasing joys. Each day, each word, each caress, each glance, must add thereto the tribute of its past joy. Yes, hearts that are great enough to forget nothing must live again, with every pulsation, all their past delights, as well as those the future promises them. That is what I used to dream, to-day it is a dream no longer. For have I not met on this earth an angel, who has made me to know all its joys, perhaps to reward me for having endured all its sorrows ? Angel of heaven, I salute thee with a kiss.

“ I send thee this hymn, sprung from my heart ; I owed it to thee ; but it will inadequately describe to thee my gratitude and those morning prayers which my heart offers up each day to her who repeated to me the whole gospel of the heart in that divine word : BELIEVE ! ”

## V

“ What, no more obstacles, dear heart ! We shall be free to belong to each other, every day, every hour, every moment, forever ! We can be, so long as we live, as happy as we now are by stealth at

rare moments! What! our pure, deep-rooted sentiments will soon assume the blissful shape of the unstinted caresses of which I dreamed! Thy little foot will bare itself for me, thou wilt be all mine! This happiness overwhelms me, kills me. My brain is too weak, it is bursting with the violence of my thoughts. I weep and I laugh, I rave. Each joy is like a red-hot arrow, it pierces me and burns me! My imagination brings thee before my fascinated, blinded eyes, in the countless capricious shapes which fleshly pleasure affects. In fact, our whole life is here, before me, with its mad torrents, its moments of repose, its joys; it boils and foams, it broadens and grows calm, it sleeps; then it awakens young and fresh once more. I see us two united, walking with the same step, living in the same thought, each always in the other's heart, appreciating and understanding each other as the echo receives sounds and repeats them through space! Can one live long, consuming one's life thus, moment by moment? Shall we not die in the first embrace? And what will then become of us, if our souls were blended even in that sweet evening kiss, which stole away our strength; that fleeting kiss, end of all my desires, powerless interpreter of so many prayers that have escaped from my soul during our hours of separation and lain hidden in the depths of my heart like remorse? Can it be that I, who used to lie in the hedge to hear the sound of thy footsteps returning to the château, that I am to be permitted to admire thee at my leisure, laughing, playing, chatting,

doing!—Joy without end! Thou knowest not all the pleasure it gives me to watch thy going and coming: one must be a man to feel these deep-rooted sensations. Every movement of thine affords me more pleasure than a mother can take in seeing her child crowing joyously or sleeping. I love thee with all forms of love combined. The grace of thy slightest gesture is always new to me. It seems to me that I could pass whole nights breathing thy breath; I would like to share in every act of thy life, to be the very substance of thy thoughts, to be thyself. However, I shall never leave thee again! No human sentiment will ever more disturb our love, infinite in its transformations, and pure and spotless as everything that is one; our love, vast as the ocean, vast as the sky! Thou art mine! all mine! I may gaze into the depths of thine eyes, there to descry the cherished soul that now hides, now reveals itself, and to divine thy wishes! My beloved, listen to what I have never yet dared to say to you, but may avow to-day. I felt within me an indescribable modesty of soul which forbade a full expression of my feelings and I tried to clothe them in the guise of thought. But now I would that I might lay bare my heart, tell thee of my ardent dreams, reveal to thee the seething ambition of my passions, inflamed by the solitude in which I have lived, constantly kindled by the anticipation of happiness, and fanned to a bright flame by thee, by thee so graceful in figure, so winning in thy manners! But it is impossible to express how I thirst for those unknown

joys born of the possession of a beloved woman, to which two hearts closely united by love must impart an unlimited power of cohesion! Know, my Pauline, that I have remained whole hours in a stupor induced by the vehemence of my passionate longings, lost in the sensation of a caress, as in a bottomless abyss. At such times, my whole life, my thoughts, my strength, are melted together, united in what I call a desire, for lack of words to express a nameless frenzy! And now I may confess to thee that, on the day when I refused the hand which thou didst offer me with such a charming gesture—a sorry freak of virtue which made thee doubt my love—I was seized by one of those fits of madness wherein men meditate murder in order to possess a woman. Yes, if I had felt the sweet pressure which thou didst offer me, as keenly as thy voice echoed in my heart, I know not how far the violence of my desires would have carried me. But I can hold my peace and suffer much. Why speak of these sorrows when my meditations are to become realities? Henceforth it will be my privilege to make of our whole life one long caress! My dearest love, light shining on thy black hair produces an effect that would hold me for long hours, with tears in my eyes, gazing at thy dear form, didst thou not say to me, turning away: ‘Cease, you make me ashamed!’ And to-morrow our love will be known! Ah! Pauline, my heart sinks at the thought of having to endure the gaze of others, the public curiosity. Let us go to Villenoix, let us remain there far from everything. I wish that

no creature with a human face might enter the sanctuary where thou wilt be mine; indeed, I wish that after us it might cease to exist, might be destroyed. Yes, I would that we might conceal from all nature a happiness which we alone can understand and feel, and which is so vast that I plunge into it to die: it is an abyss. Do not be alarmed by the tears which have moistened this letter,—they are tears of joy. My only blessing, so we are to part no more!”





\*

In 1823, I was travelling from Paris to Touraine by diligence. At Mer, the driver took on a passenger for Blois. As he admitted him to the part of the conveyance where I was sitting, he said to him, jocosely:

“You won’t be crowded here, Monsieur Lefebvre!”

I was, as it happened, alone in the compartment.

When I heard that name and saw that the stranger was a white-haired old man who seemed to be at least eighty years old, I naturally thought of Lambert’s uncle. After some cunning questions, I learned that I was not mistaken. The goodman had been to Mer to sell his vintage, and was returning to Blois. I at once inquired for news of my old chum. At my first words, the old Oratorian’s features, which were naturally solemn and stern, like those of an old soldier who has been through much suffering, became sad and clouded; the wrinkles on his forehead contracted slightly; he pressed his lips together, glanced at me doubtfully, and said:

“Have you not seen him since you were at the college together?”

“Indeed, no,” I replied. “But if there has been any neglect, we are equally guilty. As you know, young men lead such an adventurous, stirring life after leaving the schoolroom, that they must meet

to realize how fond they still are of one another. Sometimes, however, something happens to remind one of one's youth, and it is impossible for two young men to forget each other altogether, especially when they were such friends as Lambert and I. We used to be called *The-Poet-and-Pythagoras!*"

I told him my name; but, when he heard it, the old man's face grew still darker.

"You do not know his history, then?" he rejoined. "My poor nephew was to marry the richest heiress in Blois; but on the eve of his marriage he went mad."

"Lambert mad!" I exclaimed, in utter stupefaction. "What was the cause? He had the most richly-stored memory, the best-equipped brain, the ripest judgment, that I have ever known! A noble genius, a little too passionately fond of mysticism, perhaps; but his was the best heart in the world. Something very extraordinary, then, has happened to him?"

"I see that you knew him well," said the good-man.

From Mer to Blois we talked of my poor comrade, making long digressions by means of which I informed myself of the details which I have already related, in order to present the facts in such order as to make them interesting. I told his uncle of our secret studies, and how his nephew employed his time; then the old man told me of the main events of Lambert's life after I left him. According

to Monsieur Lefebvre, Lambert had shown some signs of madness before his marriage; but as those symptoms are common to all those who love passionately, they seemed to me less characteristic of madness when I knew Mademoiselle de Villenoix and the violence of his love for her.

In the provinces, where ideas tend to become rarefied, a man overflowing with novel thoughts and dominated by a theory, as Lambert was, would naturally pass for an original, if nothing worse. His language was the better calculated to arouse surprise because he spoke very rarely. He would say: "That man is not of my heaven," where others would say: "We shall not eat a peck of salt together." Every man of talent has his peculiar idiosyncrasies. The broader the genius, the more marked are the peculiarities which constitute the different degrees of *originality*. In the provinces, an original is looked upon as half a lunatic. So that Monsieur Lefebvre's first words led me to doubt my old schoolmate's insanity. As I listened to the old man, I inwardly criticised his narrative. The most serious incident had occurred several days prior to the marriage of the lovers. Louis had had several well-defined attacks of catalepsy. He had lain perfectly motionless fifty-nine hours, his eyes fixed on vacancy, without speaking or eating; a purely nervous condition, into which persons sometimes fall under the influence of violent passions; a rare phenomenon, but one whose effects are perfectly well known to the medical profession. If there were

anything to be wondered at, it was that Louis had not previously had similar attacks, to which his habit of trance-like contemplation and the nature of his thoughts predisposed him. But his constitution, external and internal, was so perfect that it had evidently neutralized hitherto the abuse of his powers. The excitement certain to be induced by the anticipation of the greatest physical pleasure, magnified in his case by chastity of the body and power of the imagination, might well have brought about that crisis, the results of which were no better understood than the cause. Moreover, the letters, which owed their preservation to chance, indicate clearly enough his transition from the pure idealism in which he had hitherto lived to the most acute sensualism. Long before, we had characterized as worthy of admiration that human phenomenon wherein Lambert saw the chance separation of our two natures, and the symptoms of entire absence of the inward being wasting its unknown faculties under the guidance of a cause as yet unstudied. That disease, a mystery no less profound than sleep, was connected with the chain of proofs which Lambert had set forth in his *Treatise on the Will*. When Monsieur Lefebvre told me of this first attack of Louis's, I suddenly recalled a conversation we had had on that subject after reading a medical book.

“Profound meditation or a delicious trance,” he said, in conclusion, “may be forms of catalepsy in the germ.”

On the day when he expressed that thought so concisely, he had tried to bind moral phenomena together by a chain of results, following step by step all the processes of the intelligence, beginning with the simple manifestations of the purely animal instinct which is sufficient for so many mortals, especially for certain men whose force is expended entirely in purely mechanical labor; then, going on to the aggregation of thoughts, to comparison, reflection, meditation, and arriving at last at the state of trance and catalepsy. Certain it is that Lambert, with the ingenuous good faith of youth, had sketched the plan of a noble book by marshalling thus the different degrees of man's inward powers. I remember that, by virtue of one of those fatalities which lead one to believe in predestination, we obtained possession of the great Martyrology, which contains a collection of most curious facts concerning the entire suspension of corporeal life at which man arrives in the paroxysms of his inward faculties. By dint of reflecting on the effects of fanaticism, Lambert was led to the thought that the collections of ideas to which we give the name of sentiments might well be the material stream of some fluid which men produce in greater or less abundance, according to the facility with which their organs absorb the elements of generation in the centres in which they live. We became deeply interested in catalepsy, and with the ardor which children display in their enterprises, we tried to bear pain *by thinking of something else*. We fatigued ourselves

sadly by trying divers experiments not unlike those practised by the *Convulsionnaires* of the last century—an instance of religious fanaticism which will some day be of service to human knowledge. I stood on Lambert's stomach for several minutes without causing him the slightest pain; but, notwithstanding these foolish experiments, we had no cataleptic fits. This digression seemed to me essential in order to explain my first doubts, which Monsieur Lefebvre dissipated completely.

“When the attack had passed,” he said to me, “my nephew was seized with the most profound terror, a depression which nothing availed to banish. He believed that he was impotent. I made it my business to watch him with the careful attention with which a mother watches her child, and luckily caught him just as he was on the point of performing upon himself the operation to which Origen believed that he owed his talent. I took him at once to Paris to place him in the hands of Monsieur Esquirol. During the journey, Louis was almost continuously in a state of somnolence, and did not recognize me. The doctors in Paris considered him incurable, and unanimously advised leaving him in the most absolute solitude, taking care not to disturb the silence which was an essential requisite of his improbable cure, and placing him in a cool room, in which the light should always be softened somewhat.—Mademoiselle de Villenoix, from whom I had concealed Louis's condition,” he continued, with tears in his eyes, “but whose marriage was

supposed to be broken off, came to Paris and learned the opinion of the doctors. She at once expressed a wish to see my nephew, who hardly knew her; thereupon she determined, after the manner of noble souls, to devote her life to giving him the care that was essential for his cure. She would have been bound to do it, she said, if he had been her husband; should she do less for her betrothed? So she took Louis to Villenoix, where they have been living two years."

Instead of continuing my journey, I stopped at Blois, with the purpose of going to see Louis. Goodman Lefebvre would not allow me to stay elsewhere than at his house, where he showed me his nephew's room, his books, and everything that had belonged to him. At each object to which he called my attention, the old man involuntarily uttered a sorrowful exclamation which betrayed the hopes to which Lambert's precocious genius had given birth, and the terrible grief caused by his irreparable loss.

"That young man knew everything, my dear monsieur!" he said, placing on the table a volume containing the works of Spinoza. "How could so well balanced a brain go astray?"

"Why, monsieur," I replied, "is it not the result of the vigorous organization of his mind? If he has really fallen a victim to that disease, still unobserved in all its developments, which we call *madness*, I am inclined to attribute it to his passion. His studies, his mode of life, had exalted his forces and his faculties to such a degree that the slightest additional



excitement would force nature to give way; love therefore either shattered them or raised them to a further expression which we calumniate, perhaps, by characterizing it when we are not familiar with it. Or he may have seen in the joys of married life an obstacle to the perfection of his inward senses and to his flight through spiritual worlds."

"My dear monsieur," replied the old man, after listening attentively to me, "your reasoning is doubtless very logical; but, even if I understood it, would that melancholy knowledge console me for the loss of my nephew?"

Lambert's uncle was one of the men who live only through the heart.

The next day I started for Villenoix. The good priest accompanied me as far as the gates of Blois. When we were on the road leading to Villenoix, he stopped and said to me:

"You can readily understand that I do not go there. But do not forget what I have told you. In Mademoiselle de Villenoix's presence, do not act as if you noticed that Louis is mad."

He stood without moving on the spot where I had left him, and looked after me until I passed out of his sight. Not without deep emotion did I walk on toward the château of Villenoix. My reflections absorbed me more and more completely with every step that I took on that road which Louis had passed over so many times, his heart overflowing with hope, his soul exalted by all the spurs of love. The shrubs, the trees, the accidents of that winding

road, indented here and there by little ravines, assumed tremendous interest for me. I sought to find there my poor schoolmate's impressions and thoughts. Doubtless those evening interviews, on the brink of that ravine where his mistress used to meet him, had revealed to Mademoiselle de Villenoix the secrets of that noble, boundless soul, as they had been revealed to me a few years earlier. But the fact which most engrossed my mind, and gave to my pilgrimage the stimulus of eager curiosity, in addition to the semi-religious feeling which impelled me, was that superb faith on the part of Mademoiselle de Villenoix of which the goodman had told me; had she, in due time, contracted her lover's madness, or had she entered so far into his mind that she could comprehend all his thoughts, even the most confused? I lost myself in meditation upon that marvellous problem of sentiment, which surpassed the noblest inspirations of love and its noblest sacrifices. To die for each other is an almost commonplace manifestation of devotion. To live faithful to a single love is heroism of the sort that made Mademoiselle Dupuis immortal. When we think that Napoléon the Great and Lord Byron had successors in those they had loved, we may be permitted to admire that widow of Bolingbroke; but Mademoiselle Dupuis had the memories of several years of happiness to live upon, whereas Mademoiselle de Villenoix, having known naught of love save its first emotions, seemed to me the type of devotion in its broadest expression. As one who

had almost gone mad, she was sublime; but as one who comprehended and interpreted madness, she added to the beauties of a noble heart a masterpiece of passion worthy to be studied.

When I perceived the high turrets of the château, the sight of which had so often thrilled poor Lambert, my own heart beat fast. I had made myself a partner, so to speak, in his life and his present situation by recalling all the events of our youth. At last, I found myself in a great deserted courtyard, and walked as far as the main door of the château without meeting anybody. The sound of my footsteps summoned an elderly woman to whom I delivered the letter Monsieur Lefebvre had written to Mademoiselle de Villenoix. Soon the same woman again appeared and ushered me into a room on the ground-floor, floored with black and white marble tiles, and with the blinds tightly closed; at the end of the room, I could indistinctly see Louis Lambert.

"Be seated, monsieur," said a sweet voice which went to my heart.

Mademoiselle de Villenoix was standing beside me, although I had not heard her approach, and had noiselessly brought me a chair, which I did not take at once. The room was so dark that, at first glance, Mademoiselle de Villenoix and Louis seemed to me like two black masses indistinctly outlined against the darker background. I seated myself at last under the spell of the feeling which seizes us in spite of ourselves under the gloomy arches of a church. My

eyes, still affected by the sunlight, became accustomed very gradually to that artificial darkness.

"Monsieur is your old college friend," she said.

Lambert did not reply. At last, I was able to see him, and he presented one of those spectacles which engrave themselves forever on the memory. He was standing with both elbows resting on the projection formed by the wainscoting, so that his body seemed to bend beneath the weight of his bowed head. His hair, which was as long as a woman's, fell over his shoulders, and surrounded his face in such a way as to make him resemble the busts which represent the great men of the age of Louis XIV. His face was perfectly white. He constantly rubbed one of his legs against the other with an automatic movement which nothing could check, and the continual rubbing of the two bones made a ghastly noise. Beside him was a mattress of moss, laid on a board.

"He very rarely goes to bed," said Mademoiselle de Villenoix, "but when he does he sleeps several days."

Louis stood as I saw him, day and night, his eyes fixed on vacancy, never raising or lowering the lids as we always do. After asking Mademoiselle de Villenoix if a little more light would distress Lambert, and receiving a negative reply, I opened the blind a little way and could then see the expression of my old friend's face. Alas! already wrinkled, already blanched, the light already gone from his eyes, which had become glassy like a blind man's.

All his features seemed to be drawn by a convulsive movement toward the top of his head. I tried several times to speak to him, but he did not hear me. He was a remnant of vitality rescued from the grave, a sort of conquest of life over death, or of death over life. I was there about an hour, absorbed by thoughts that I cannot define, tossed about by a thousand conflicting ideas. I listened to Mademoiselle de Villenoix as she told me all the details of that life of a child in its cradle. Suddenly, Louis ceased to rub his legs together, and said, slowly:

*"The angels are white."*

I cannot describe the effect produced on me by those words, by the sound of that voice I loved so well, whose accents, for which I had waited in such painful expectation, seemed lost to me forever. My eyes filled with tears in spite of myself. An involuntary presentiment flashed through my mind and made me doubt whether Louis had lost his reason. I was very sure that he did not see me or hear me; but the harmonious tones of his voice, which seemed to indicate divine happiness, clothed his words with irresistible power. An incomplete revelation of an unknown world, those words echoed in our souls like some superb church chimes in the silence of midnight. I was no longer surprised that Mademoiselle de Villenoix believed Louis to be perfectly sound in his understanding. Perhaps the life of the soul had annulled the life of the body. Perhaps his companion had, as I had at that moment, vague intuitions of that melodious, flower-begirt

nature, which we call, in its widest sense, HEAVEN. That woman, that angel passed all her time with him, seated before an embroidery frame, and whenever she drew her needle, she looked up at Lambert with a sad, sweet expression. Unable to endure that pitiful spectacle, for, unlike Mademoiselle de Villenoix, I was unable to divine all its secret meanings, I left the room, and we walked together in the courtyard for some time, talking of herself and Lambert.

"Doubtless Louis seems to be mad," she said; "but he is not, if the name of madman is properly applicable only to those whose brain has become impaired from some unknown cause, and who offer no reason for their acts. In my husband's case, everything is perfectly well balanced. Although he did not recognize you physically, do not believe that he did not see you. He has succeeded in severing himself from his body, and he sees us in some other form, I know not what. When he speaks, he expresses marvellous thoughts. But not infrequently he finishes with words an idea begun in his mind, or begins with speech a proposition which he finishes mentally. To other men he would seem insane; to me, who live in his thought, all his ideas are perfectly lucid. I travel over the road that his mind follows, and although I do not know all its détours, I am always able, none the less, to reach the end with him. Who has not, many a time, while thinking of some trivial matter, been led on to a solemn train of thought by ideas or memories involved therein?

Often, after mentioning some unimportant object, the innocent starting-point of some rapid meditation, a thinker forgets or says nothing about the abstract steps which led him to his conclusion, and when he resumes his remarks mentions only the last link in that chain of reflections. Men of common mould to whom such rapidity of mental vision is incomprehensible, and who know nothing of the inward working of the mind, begin to laugh at the dreamer, and call him mad, if he is given to that sort of forgetfulness. Louis is always like that: he is forever whirling through the expanse of thought, with the celerity of a swallow's flight; and I am able to follow him in all his divagations. That is the story of his madness. Perhaps Louis will return some day to this life in which we vegetate; but if he breathes the air of heaven before the time when we are permitted to live there, why should we desire to see him among us again? I am content to hear the beating of his heart, my whole happiness consists in being by his side. Is he not all mine? In three years I have possessed him twice, each time for a few days: once in Switzerland, and again on an island on the coast of Bretagne, where I took him for the sea-baths. Twice I have been very happy! I can live on my memories."

"But do you not write down the words he lets fall?" I asked.

"Why?" was her reply.

I held my peace; human science seemed very petty in that woman's presence.



"When he first began to speak," she continued, "I think that I set down his first observations, but I soon ceased to do it; at that time, I could not understand them at all."

I asked her for them with a glance; she understood me, and this is what I was able to rescue from oblivion:

#### I

Here on earth, everything is the product of an **ETHEREAL SUBSTANCE**, the common principle of several phenomena known under the misapplied names of *electricity, heat, light, galvanic fluid, magnetic fluid*, etc. The universality of the transmutations of this *substance* constitutes what is commonly called **Matter**.

#### II

The brain is a retort to which the **ANIMAL** transports what each of its organisms, according to the strength of its mechanism, is able to absorb of this **SUBSTANCE**, and whence it issues transformed into **Will**.

The **Will** is a fluid, the attribute of every being endowed with motion. Hence the innumerable forms which the **ANIMAL** assumes, and which are the results of its combination with this **SUBSTANCE**. Its instincts are the result of the necessities imposed upon it by the environment in which it matures. Hence its variations.

#### III

In man, the **Will** becomes a force which is peculiar to him, and which surpasses in intensity the will of all other species.

#### IV

**Will** is connected with **SUBSTANCE** by constantly deriving sustenance therefrom, and detects it in all its transmutations, penetrating them by **Thought**, which is a special product of

the human will combined with SUBSTANCE in its modified forms.

## V

From the greater or less perfection of the human mechanism come the innumerable forms which Thought assumes.

## VI

The Will is exerted through organs commonly called the five senses, which are in reality only one, the power to see. Touch and taste, hearing and smell, are sight adapted to the transformations of SUBSTANCE, which man can grasp in its two conditions, transformed and not transformed.

## VII

All things which by their form fall within the domain of the only true sense, sight, may be reduced to a few elementary bodies, the bases of which are in the air, in the light, or in the principles of the air and the light. Sound is a modification of air; all colors are modifications of light; every perfume is a combination of air and light; thus the four manifestations of matter in its relation to man, sound, color, perfume, and form, have the same origin; for the day is not far distant when science will recognize the affiliation between the principles of light and those of air. Thought, which is related to light, is expressed by speech, which is related to sound. For Thought, therefore, everything is derived from SUBSTANCE, whose transformations differ only in NUMBER, in the adjustment of the proportions which produce the individuals or units of what are called KINGDOMS.

## VIII

When SUBSTANCE is absorbed in a sufficient Number, it makes of man a mechanism of enormous power, which communicates with the essential principles of SUBSTANCE, and acts upon organic nature after the manner of great currents which absorb smaller ones. Volition sets in motion this force independent of thought, which by its concentration

acquires some of the properties of SUBSTANCE, as, for instance, the velocity of light, the penetrating power of electricity, the power of saturating bodies; to which we must add the consciousness of what it can do. But there is in man an original, predominant phenomenon which admits of no analysis. If we decompose man entirely, we may, perhaps, find the elements of Thought and Will; but we shall encounter none the less that X, with which I have sometimes come in contact, and shall be unable to analyze it. That X is the WORD, whose touch burns and consumes those who are not ready to receive it. It constantly engenders SUBSTANCE.

## IX

Anger, like all manifestations of our passions, is a current of human force which acts electrically; its vibrations, when it frees itself, act upon the persons present even though they be not its object or its cause. Do we not meet men who, by an effort of their volition, distil and purify the sentiments of the masses?

## X

Fanaticism and all sentiments are living forces. These forces, in certain beings, become streams of Will, which collect and carry away everything.

## XI

If Space exist, there are certain faculties which give the power to traverse it so swiftly that their effects are equivalent to its annihilation. From thy bed to the utmost limits of the world, there are but two steps: WILL—FAITH!

## XII

Deeds are nothing, they do not exist; no part of us endures save Ideas.

## XIII

The world of Ideas is divided into three spheres: the sphere of Instinct, the sphere of Abstractions, the sphere of Speciality.

## XIV

The greater part of visible mankind, the weaker part, dwells in the sphere of Instinct. Instinctives are born, toil, and die without rising to the second stage of human intelligence, Abstraction.

## XV

Abstraction is the beginning of society. If Abstraction is an almost divine power compared to Instinct, it is incredibly feeble compared with the gift of Speciality, which alone can explain the existence of God. Abstraction comprises a whole nature in germ, more truly than the seed contains the elements of a plant and its fruits. Of Abstraction are born laws, arts, interests, social ideas. It is the glory and the scourge of the world: the glory because it created social systems; the scourge because it exempts man from entering Speciality, which is one of the roads leading to the infinite. Man judges everything by his abstract ideas,—good, evil, virtue, sin. His theories of right are his scales, his justice is blind: whereas God's justice sees—therein is everything. There must necessarily be intermediate beings who separate the kingdom of the Instinctives from the kingdom of the Abstractives, and in whom Instinct and Abstraction are blended in an infinite variety of proportions. In some, Instinct prevails; in others, Abstraction. Then there are those in whom each neutralizes the other, both acting with equal force.

## XVI

Speciality consists in viewing the things of the material world as well as those of the spiritual world in their original and consequential ramifications. The noblest human geniuses are those who set out from the dark shadows of Abstraction to march onward to the light of Speciality.—*Speciality*, *species*, sight, to speculate, to see everything, and that at a single glance; *speculum*, a mirror or means of estimating the worth of a thing by seeing it as a whole.—Jesus was a specialist. He saw the fact in its roots and its effects, in the past which

engendered it, in the present, when it made itself manifest, in the future, when it developed; His sight penetrated the understanding of other men. The perfection of the inward sight gives birth to the gift of Speciality. Speciality implies Intuition. Intuition is one of the faculties of the INWARD MAN, one of whose attributes is Speciality. It acts by means of an imperceptible sensation unknown to him who obeys it: Napoléon, for instance, instinctively changing his position from before an advancing cannon-ball.

#### XVII

Between the sphere of Speciality and that of Abstraction, there are, as there are between the latter and that of Instinct, beings in whom the differing attributes of the two spheres are blended, and produce mixed products: men of genius.

#### XVIII

Speciality is naturally the most perfect expression of MAN, the link which unites him to the higher worlds: he acts, he sees, and he feels through his INWARD BEING. The Abstractive thinks, the Instinctive acts.

#### XIX

Of the three stages of Man, the *Instinctive* is below the level; the *Abstractive* is on the level; the *Specialist* is above it. *Speciality* opens to man his true career, Infinity begins to reveal itself in him; there he catches a glimpse of his destiny.

#### XX

There are three worlds—the NATURAL, the SPIRITUAL, the DIVINE. Mankind goes and comes in the Natural World, which is stable neither in its essence nor in its faculties. The Spiritual World is stable in its essence and mobile in its faculties. The Divine World is stable in its essence and in its faculties. Therefore there necessarily exists a material worship, a spiritual worship, a divine worship; three forms which are expressed by Action, Word, and Prayer,

otherwise called Deed, Understanding, Love. The Instinctive demands deeds, the Abstractive gives his mind to Ideas; the Specialist looks forward to the end, he aspires to God, whose presence he feels or whom he contemplates.

## XXI

And so, perhaps, the day will come when the inverse meaning of ET VERBUM CARO FACTUM EST will be the gist of a new Gospel which will say: AND THE FLESH SHALL BE MADE THE WORD, IT SHALL BECOME THE WORD OF GOD.

## XXII

The Resurrection is caused by the wind from heaven which sweeps the worlds. The angel borne upon the wind does not say: "Ye Dead, arise!" He says: "Let the Living arise!"

Such are the thoughts to which I have succeeded, not without great difficulty, in giving forms consonant with our understanding. There are others which Pauline recollected more particularly,—why, I know not,—which also I have transcribed; but they drive the mind to despair, when, knowing from what intellect they emanated, one seeks to understand them. I shall set down a few of them, in order to complete my sketch of this figure, perhaps also because, in these last thoughts, Lambert's system seems to comprehend the worlds better than in those given above, which seem applicable only to the zoölogical movement. But there is a connection evident enough to the eyes of those persons—an extremely small number, by the way—who take pleasure in plunging into this sort of intellectual abyss.

## I

Everything here below exists only by Motion and by Number.

## II

Motion is in some sense Number in action.

## III

Motion is the product of a force engendered by the Word and by a resistance which is Matter. Without resistance, Motion would have been without result, its action would have been infinite. Newton's gravitation is not a law, but an effect of the general law of universal motion.

## IV

Motion, by reason of resistance, produces a combination which is Life; as soon as one or the other becomes the stronger, Life ceases.

## V

Motion is nowhere sterile, it gives birth everywhere to Number; but it may be neutralized by a more powerful resistance, as in the mineral.

## VI

Number, which produces all variations, also engenders Harmony, which, in its highest acceptation, is the relation between the parts and Unity.

## VII

Without Motion, all things would be one and the same thing. Its products, identical in their essence, would differ only in the number which produced the faculties.

## VIII

Man is related to faculties, the angel to the essence.

## IX

By uniting his body to elementary action, man may reach the point where he can unite himself to light through his INWARD BEING.



## X

Number is an intelligent witness which pertains to man alone, and through which he may arrive at knowledge of the Word.

## XI

There is a number which the impure cannot go beyond, the number at which creation ended.

## XII

Unity was the starting-point of everything ever produced; from Unity resulted Compounds, but the end must be identical with the beginning. Hence the *spiritual* formula: Compound Unity, variable Unity, fixed Unity.

## XIII

Thus the universe is variety in Unity. Motion is the means, Number is the result. The end is the return of all things to Unity, which is God.

## XIV

THREE and SEVEN are the greatest *spiritual* numbers.

## XV

THREE is the formula of created worlds. It is the *spiritual* symbol of creation, as it is the *material* symbol of circumference. In truth, God proceeded by curved lines only. The straight line is an attribute of Infinity; so man, who looks forward to Infinity, reproduces it in his works. TWO is the number of generation. THREE is the number of existence, which includes generation and product. Add the Quaternary and you have SEVEN, which is the formula of Heaven; God is above, He is Unity.

After going in once more to see Lambert, I took leave of his wife and returned to Blois, a prey to ideas so opposed to social life, that, notwithstanding

my promise, I abandoned all thought of going to Villenoix again. The sight of Louis had an indefinable, sinister influence upon me. I dreaded to stand again in that intoxicating atmosphere, where catalepsy was contagious. Any man would have felt as I did, a longing to plunge into the infinite, just as the soldiers killed themselves in the sentry-box in which one of their number had committed suicide in camp at Boulogne. Everyone knows that Napoléon was obliged to burn that wooden box, a depository of ideas which had reached the stage of fatal miasma. Perhaps it was with Louis's chamber as with that sentry-box. These two instances would be additional proofs of his theory concerning the transmission of the will. I felt an extraordinary mental disturbance there, which went beyond the most fantastic effects caused by tea, coffee, opium, by sleep, or by fever, mysterious agents whose terrible performances so often set our brains on fire. Perhaps I might have fashioned into a complete book these scattered remnants of thoughts, comprehensible only to certain minds accustomed to lean over the brink of an abyss, in the hope of descrying its bottom. The life of that immense brain, which doubtless went to pieces on all sides like a too extensive empire, might have been developed in the narrative of the visions of that strange being, incomplete either through too great strength or through weakness; but I have preferred to set down my impressions rather than compose a work more or less poetic in its nature.

Lambert died at the age of twenty-eight, on September 25, 1824, in the arms of his beloved. She buried him on one of the islands in the park at Villenoix. His gravestone consists of a simple stone cross without name or date. A flower born on the brink of the abyss, he was destined to fall into it, unknown to fame, with his strange colors and perfumes. Like many misunderstood persons, he had often longed to plunge proudly into nothingness, and leave there the secrets of his life! And yet Mademoiselle de Villenoix would have been entitled to inscribe Lambert's name upon that cross, and to indicate her own. Since her husband's death, that future union has been her hourly hope. But faithful souls know naught of the vanities of grief. Villenoix is falling to decay. Lambert's wife has ceased to live there, thinking, doubtless, that thus she can better imagine it as it used to be. Lately she was heard to say:

"I had his heart, to God his genius."

Château of Saché, June-July 1832.

### PUBLISHERS' NOTE

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The date of authorship of *El Verdugo—The Executioner*—is given in the Edition Definitive as 1820, but this is doubtless a misprint for 1829, the year critically assigned to the production of the tale.



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